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## Member Update

**Title:** NACMA Review of Foreign Seeds Classifications

**Update No.:** 2 of 08

**Date of Issue:** 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008

### Distribution

- NACMA Members – primary contact list. Please circulate to all appropriate internal parties.

### Background

The NACMA Standards Committee has received a number of requests to review the way 'foreign seeds' in grain, oilseeds and pulses is managed in Australia. Currently most of the industry mirrors AWB's foreign seed assessments for wheat, sometimes with subtle variations.

AWB defines foreign seeds as seeds of any plant that are not wheat. They further categorize foreign seeds into two groups, Small Foreign Seeds and all others. The 'others' are further sub divided into 10 sub groups.

Many of the requests for changes to the foreign seeds assessment stem from the complexity of the current system. For this reason AWB conducted a review of their foreign seeds categories in their wheat standards. As a result of this review AWB has proposed some changes to how they assess foreign seeds for AWB wheat receival standards.

The NACMA Standards Committee believes similar changes also need to be made for non-wheat grains and, in light of the changes to the wheat marketing arrangements, the Committee deemed it appropriate to look at the processes as to how foreign seeds are assessed throughout the industry.

### Discussion paper

The NACMA Standards Committee has developed a discussion paper (attached) and encourages industry comment from individual organisations and industry groups. The discussion paper outlines three alternatives. The Standards Committee endorses Option 3.

### Submissions

Submissions close on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> February to [admin@nacma.com.au](mailto:admin@nacma.com.au) . Please put **Review of Foreign Seeds Classifications** in the subject line.



**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008  
**Issue:** NACMA Review of Foreign Seeds Classifications

### **Introduction**

The NACMA Standards Committee has received a number of requests to review the way 'foreign seeds' in grain, oilseeds and pulses is managed in Australia. Currently most of the industry mirrors AWB's foreign seed assessments for wheat, sometimes with subtle variations.

AWB defines foreign seeds as seeds of any plant that are not wheat. They further categorize foreign seeds into two groups, Small Foreign Seeds and all others. The 'others' are further sub divided into 10 sub groups.

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### **Review process**

Foreign seed classifications have broad impacts across a wide range of the farming, food and feed industries as well as having quarantine implications for State Government departments and importing countries. It is therefore important that the review process engages these sectors where appropriate and involves participants that can represent the views from these sectors as well as NACMA members.

The NACMA Standards Committee has developed an options paper that outlines some broad alternative methods of foreign seed classifications for the Australian grains industry. The Committee will circulate the options paper and seek comment on the specific options and the preferred alternative. The Committee invites comments from members, industry, farmer groups and government. Comments should be sent to NACMA by Friday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

At the close of the consultation period, the Committee will meet to consider the industry feedback and decide how to progress. The Committee will provide feedback back to members and industry on the responses.

**The NACMA Standards Committee endorses Option 3 below.**

### **NACMA Standards Committee Foreign Seeds Classification Alternatives**

#### Alternative 1 – Status Quo

##### *Description*

Maintain the current system whereby AWB sets foreign seeds classifications for wheat, the NACMA Standards committee reviews and endorses the classifications and other industries modify the weeds lists for coarse grains, pulses and oilseeds as appropriate.

##### *Advantages*

- No changes to the current system of setting classifications are required.

##### *Disadvantages*

- The current system is complicated and assessment of a sample is time consuming during harvest.
- There are doubts that samples are always strictly assessed under these Standards, and that the system is widely understood and complied with.
- There have been calls for this system to be simplified to increase speed and reduce costs of assessment, yet still accurately assess the quality of the sample.
- Foreign seeds classification is driven by wheat and no consideration is given to non-wheat grains in the "standard" list by AWB.

- The system is vulnerable to any changes by AWB as they have been the driver of foreign seeds classifications in wheat. Changes in classifications in wheat may lead to major modifications in other commodity's weed tolerances.

#### Alternative 2 – Proposed AWB Changes

##### *Description*

Change the foreign seed classifications as per the proposed AWB revisions.

##### *Advantages*

- Relatively simple as it only involves a modification to the current classifications.
- Simplifies the current system by reducing the sub-classification of foreign seeds from 10 types to 8 types.

##### *Disadvantages*

- The proposed changes still remain complicated by global comparisons and remain complicated to implement during assessment.
- Foreign seeds classification is driven by one company (AWB) for one grain (wheat) and no consideration is given to non-wheat grains.
- The system is vulnerable to any changes proposed by AWB as they are the major determiner of foreign seeds classifications in the "standard" list.
- May result in competing lists by different wheat marketers if AWB loses power or desire to set wheat standards.
- Involves identifying "above and below" screen portions of weed seeds. This is not how export contracts tend to be written and is an added complication to the existing classification procedure.

[Link to AWB proposed changes](#)

#### Alternative 3 – Structural changes to Foreign Seeds Classification Process

##### *Description*

Introduce an overarching process to manage foreign seeds in grains, pulses and oilseeds in Australia.

This would set tolerances for weed seeds of economic significance, and relegation of non-significant foreign seeds to foreign matter. These tolerances would apply independently to different commodities but would relate to:

- Domestic regulations (toxicity/quarantine) eg: Rattlepods, Heliotrope, Parthenium
- International market quarantine eg: Johnson grass
- International and domestic marketing (end use) issues eg: Black oats

Maintaining foreign seeds classifications would be the responsibility of the NACMA Standards committee and would be via the existing industry and member consultation process, including liaison with Pulse Australia and the Australian Oilseed Federation as currently prevails for setting of Standards.

##### *Advantages*

- Significantly simplifies the foreign seeds classification process. This has major benefits in training, compliance and production of reference materials for use by samplers.
- The foreign seeds classification would have joint industry ownership through the NACMA Standards Committee.
- Standard lists would be published for all grains, with input from Pulse Australia and the Australian Oilseed Federation.
- Foreign seeds listed would be of direct relevance to the marketing domestically and internationally of Australian grain.

### *Disadvantages*

- Involves major changes to the current system so change would have to be carefully managed to ensure:
  - that the system stands up under marketing, scientific and regulatory scrutiny,
  - the introduction is rolled out across the industry in a coordinated manner.

### **Links**

AWB wheat receival standards

<http://www.awb.com.au/growers/receivalstds/wheatreceivalstandards/>

Canadian Grain Standards

<http://www.grainscanada.gc.ca/Pubs/GGG/ggg-e.htm>

U.S. Grain Standards

<http://www.gipsa.usda.gov/GIPSA/webapp?area=home&subject=grpi&topic=sq-ous>