



**U.S. WHEAT  
ASSOCIATES**



## **Comments Regarding the Administration's Reviews and Report to the President on Trade Agreement Violations and Abuses**

**USTR-2017-0010**

**Full Submission**

**July 31, 2017**

The following is a written submission on violations and abuses of trade agreements, pursuant to a request for comments from the U.S. Trade Representative and U.S. Department of Commerce. These comments are on behalf of U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) and the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG).

Trade agreements are an integral part of the trade policy landscape for the U.S. wheat industry. The foundation is the World Trade Organization (WTO), and building on that are various free trade agreements (FTAs), Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFAs), and Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs).

It should be very clear that the wheat industry does not see violations of trade agreements as reasons for abandoning or renegotiating agreements. Executive Order 13796 states that “It is also the policy of the United States to renegotiate or terminate any existing trade agreement... that, on net, harms the United States economy.” While the wheat industry does not disagree with that policy as stated, USW and NAWG do not support terminating any existing trade agreements. Renegotiations should allow for periodic modernization but should be done strategically and use resources wisely. USTR should finish updating NAFTA and prioritize modernized FTAs with *new* markets.

The United States has FTAs with just 20 countries. There are approximately 175 other countries in the world. USTR should focus on new, high-standard FTAs with attractive markets from the 175.

Trade agreement violations and abuses are another issue, as those happen regularly and should be addressed within existing trade agreements, whether FTA or WTO. These agreements provide opportunities for dialogue to correct problems or, if that fails, enforcement.

In fact, trade agreements make enforcement possible. Without those agreements, the United States would be forced to rely on tools of dubious effectiveness – like the Trade Act of 1974’s Section 301 authority – in cases of unfair treatment. Of course, unfair treatment at that point would be in the eye of the beholder, and there would be no recourse to international agreements to determine that a policy is unfair. If dialogue fails to correct a policy, the United States could either do nothing and let it continue or take retaliatory actions that the other country may deem to be unfair.

It is also important to understand that trade agreements are legal documents that provide the rules of trade for largely private, non-state actors. They are not transactional documents that determine how much one country sells to another. The volume of trade in either direction often has no relation to violations or abuses of agreements.

What the wheat industry and our customers in foreign milling sectors look for in trade agreements are rules that minimize costs of doing business so that wheat grown by American farmers can move as efficiently as possible to our foreign customers. This occurs, among other provisions, through tariff elimination, regulatory cooperation, improved sanitary and phytosanitary frameworks, subsidy disciplines, and strong enforcement tools that address violations rather than increase protection.

Beyond that, trade flows are the responsibility of millions of private actors buying and selling wheat, other agricultural products, and the incredible variety of goods and services that make up economies. Those trade flows should not be predetermined or influenced in a way that violates trade commitments.

The U.S. wheat industry is well aware of violations of existing agreements. To the extent that the agreements themselves are flawed in relation to wheat trade, it is because disputes can take years to resolve and violations due to unfair treatment can be fixed without consequences just before retaliation takes effect. And that assumes a violation even makes it to a dispute, which the clear majority do not. Improved mechanisms to tackle problems short of full dispute, like the cooperative technical consultation mechanism in the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, would also help to address these violations and abuses more quickly.

Every year, USW submits a document for the USTR’s National Trade Estimate (NTE) that describes the most troublesome trade agreement violations and abuses facing the wheat industry. Notably, these problems are all rooted in the provisions of FTAs or the WTO agreements, which the industry relies on to challenge policy barriers.

These descriptions are provided below, and updated in some cases based on more recent events. In particular, a topic was added under the European Union section to reflect Italy’s rule on durum origin labelling on pasta packaging and Vietnam was added to describe an unwarranted phytosanitary barrier. Text in blue indicates that the language was added to reflect events that occurred since the submission of the NTE in October 2016.

### **2017 NTE Submission on Foreign Trade Barriers to U.S. Wheat Exports**

The following is a submission for the 2017 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers as requested by the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

Open markets and fair trade are critical to the U.S. wheat industry as roughly half of U.S. wheat production is exported each year. U.S. wheat farmers have a competitive advantage in producing wheat and the United States is one of the largest exporters of wheat in the world. Ensuring a fair playing field for U.S. producers facilitates wheat exports, bringing revenue and jobs to rural America.

In the most recent 2015/16 marketing year (MY), the United States exported 20.5 million metric tons (MMT) of wheat, valued at \$5 billion. World wheat trade in 2015/16 reached 172 MMT, with the United States accounting for 12 percent of global exports. This was a particularly challenging year for U.S. wheat exports, reflecting abundant global supplies and a strong dollar compared to competitor currencies.

There are a number of barriers and policies around the world that restrict wheat trade. Several of these are common constraints across multiple markets, while other barriers are market specific. Details on general trade barriers as well as country specific issues that limit exports for U.S. wheat farmers have been identified along with their effect on U.S. wheat exports.

Traditional trade barriers, i.e. tariffs, are still one of the biggest impediments to agricultural trade, even when imposed in full compliance with a country's World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments. This submission will not provide separate sections on these tariff barriers, but they are still a major impediment to U.S. wheat exports in many parts of the world.

A second major problem faced by wheat exporters is many countries' agricultural policies are driven by a philosophy of import substitution. Often, countries impose trade barriers to discourage consumption of foreign agricultural commodities. These policies can include tariffs, licenses and other non-tariff barriers, but also include policies designed to spur increased domestic production and requirements to purchase or blend domestic products. No country is entirely self-sufficient in all products and there is no need to be. Artificially inducing planting of wheat or other commodities shields farmers from competition, causing them to become uncompetitive and reliant on a closed system.

The number of free trade agreements between customs unions and countries is increasing at a rapid pace. While the United States has moved forward with several free trade agreements, our competitors are aggressively negotiating new market access. Australia, Canada, Russia and the European Union (EU) have concluded or are negotiating agreements with wheat importing countries that have already or will put U.S. wheat farmers at a price disadvantage due to tariff differences. The United States must be active in pursuing new trade opportunities to maintain and increase export opportunities for U.S. wheat producers. We strongly support the negotiation of new bilateral and regional trade agreements. We also support multilateral and plurilateral approaches to reducing trade barriers through the WTO.

Domestic subsidies that exceed WTO commitment levels encourage production, eliminate trade opportunities and lower global wheat prices, reducing revenue to U.S. wheat producers. The use of high support prices often results in surplus stocks and the need to subsidize exports. A number of wheat producing countries, especially advanced developing countries, are providing trade distorting subsidies beyond their allowable commitments through input subsidies and market price supports [U.S. support for agriculture is consistently far below its WTO limits]. The U.S. challenge to China's price support program (DS511) was an important first step in correcting this trend.

Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regulatory standards around the world are a concern for the U.S. wheat industry because these standards often disrupt trade. Since the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, which strengthened SPS measures and placed restrictions on the use of tariffs and quotas, importing countries have devoted more resources to developing and enforcing SPS regulations, which have proliferated. New food safety standards are also being implemented. In some instances, USW questions whether these SPS requirements are based on sound science and use the least trade distorting measures, or instead are based on misperceptions or are motivated by purposes other than intended by the SPS agreement. The U.S. wheat industry's focus on these issues parallels the priorities of the U.S. government to combat SPS issues that pose a significant barrier to international trade.

Plant health regulations present the most intractable problems as some importing countries demand freedom from one or more pests that occur in the U.S. and may be present in wheat shipments. Plant health restrictions of most concern involve wheat diseases (most often fungal diseases) or weed seeds. Weed seed requirements can be very difficult if not impossible to meet because grain cleaning systems cannot remove all weed seeds and grain inspectors at export points do not have the time or expertise to recognize even a fraction of the weed seeds that may be present. It is critical that scientific risk assessments are conducted to validate these new regulations as they have the potential to completely eliminate the U.S. as a supplier to markets that have been historical customers.

Residue and contaminant requirements are also proliferating. Many, if not most, importers now have regulations concerning pesticide residue tolerances. Once those are in place, limits on mycotoxin and heavy metal (cadmium and lead) content often follow. Generally, U.S. wheat conforms to these requirements, but the proliferation of requirements and the uncertainty of differing requirements, testing delays, false positives, or uneven enforcement can discourage trade.

Regulations limiting the import of commodities derived through biotechnology are a concern to the wheat industry. While biotech wheat is not expected to be in commercial production in the U.S. for a number of years, well-entrenched resistance to acceptance of commodities produced via biotechnology is a concern that inhibits progress toward development of biotech wheat varieties. The lack of standard tolerances for low level presence can disrupt trade for commodities that do not even have commercial biotech varieties in production. The U.S. government's efforts to ensure that regulations regarding the trade of commodities derived through biotechnology be based on scientific evidence is fully supported by the wheat industry.

The following sections provide specific examples of foreign trade barriers.

## **BRAZIL**

**Market Access.** Brazil agreed to a tariff rate quota (TRQ) under the Uruguay Round agreement, allowing for 750,000 metric tons (MT) of wheat to enter duty-free each year. However, Brazil never implemented this commitment, and in 1996, notified the WTO of its intention to eliminate it through Article XXVIII proceedings. To date, Brazil has neither fully implemented nor officially eliminated the TRQ. As part of the Uruguay Round TRQ commitment, the United States obtained initial negotiating rights. Brazil cannot eliminate this commitment unilaterally and must work with the United States to reach an acceptable agreement for implementing the WTO TRQ commitment or finding an alternative that is acceptable to the United States. Brazil did confirm the TRQ's existence in four WTO notifications since 1996 dated May 2003, March 2009, November 2012, and January 2015.

Brazil's wheat duty is bound at 55 percent and currently applied at 10 percent. A zero duty TRQ would provide valuable trade opportunities for the United States and other wheat exporting WTO country members. USW appreciates the administration's work so far in negotiating a resolution to the TRQ issue with Brazil. We encourage continued discussions to implement a solution that increases U.S. wheat's access to this market.

It should be noted that Brazil has successfully set up duty free TRQs for wheat in the past, though not specific to its WTO commitment. Brazil implemented a 2.0 MMT zero duty wheat TRQ from January 1 to August 31, 2008, a 3.0 MMT TRQ from April through November 2013 and a 1.0 MMT TRQ from June through August 2014. These instances illustrate that Brazil is capable of establishing and managing a zero-duty TRQ system that would make Brazil compliant with its WTO commitment.

**Domestic and Export Subsidies.** Every WTO member committed to caps on trade distorting domestic subsidies upon accession to the WTO, known as the aggregate measure of support (AMS). Countries also have caps on *de minimis* spending as a percentage of general and product specific production. Developing nations, such as Brazil have a *de minimus* cap of 10 percent.

Brazil's calculation methodology for its price support program should be questioned, as it does not include all wheat production, understating the notified level of support. The variation in support spending year on year is a common feature of Brazil's notifications given their incorrect methodology on eligible production.

Based on numbers from Brazil's WTO notifications, Brazil exceeded its product specific *de minimis* subsidy limits for wheat in 2007/08, 2008/09, 2010/11, and 2013/14. Analysis by DTB Associates found that excessive support continued in 2014/15.

There is also good reason to believe that the the Premio para Escoamento de Produto (PEP) program and the Premio Equalizador Pago ao Produtor (PEPRO) programs act as export subsidies for wheat. These programs are actually structured in a similar manner to the former U.S. "Step 2" program that was used for cotton, which Brazil successfully challenged at the

WTO. The U.S. lost on the argument that Step 2 is not an export subsidy because domestic destinations as well as export destinations were eligible for the subsidy. [These programs were inactive for wheat in 2015, but resumed in 2016, and provided support for nearly half a million tons of wheat.](#)

**Merchant Marine Renewal Tax.** U.S. wheat imports are subject to a 25 percent merchant marine renewal tax (MMRT) on freight costs. The MMRT applies to all wheat arriving from outside of Argentina and other members of the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) to ports from Bahia, Salvador and south. In the northeast of the country, mills must submit an application to be exempt from MMRT payments.

The MMRT is supposed to finance development of the Brazilian merchant fleet and shipyard industry, but the tax is only applied to imports – exports are exempt even though Brazilian agricultural exporters are heavy users of Brazilian shipyards.

As understood from WTO language, additional tariffs like the MMRT are only supposed to cover the cost of service and a 25 percent tariff on ocean freight seems excessive (GATT Article VIII). Exported goods are also exempt, even though export shippers are heavy users of Brazil's ports. Brazil's MMRT may be in violation of GATT Articles I, III, and VIII.

**SPS.** Brazil maintains burdensome bans on pests that likely are unsuitable to its climate and farming practices, yet these onerous SPS requirements have been included in their import regulations for years. USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has repeatedly tried to negotiate with their Brazilian counterparts on the removal of phytosanitary restrictions on U.S. wheat.

Currently, Brazil only allows imports of certain wheat classes and excludes shipments from the U.S. West Coast ports. These restrictions have been based primarily on two diseases, flag smut (*Urocystis agropyri*) and cephalosporium stripe. Flag smut is also present in Argentina, but Brazil allows Argentine imports without restriction. Cephalosporium stripe requires climatic conditions, namely repeated freezing and thawing of ground in the spring to cause root damage, which are unlikely to occur in Brazil, and the disease is very unlikely to be conveyed in grain shipments.

There is also a risk that Brazil's unwarranted restrictions on flag smut and cephalosporium stripe could be adopted by other importers and would then cause further economic loss to U.S. wheat growers.

Brazil's response in trying to address these specific issues has been to threaten reconsideration of all possible quarantine pests in wheat with the possibility of finding new restrictions, despite having identified no actual quarantine problems in U.S. wheat shipments. This situation has been going on for 15 years or more with little sign of progress.

**Impact.** Brazil is a major wheat importer, purchasing 7.0 MMT on average over the last five years, which varies with the size of their domestic crop. U.S. market share averaged less than 10 percent for the five marketing years from 2008/09 to 2012/13, but was nearly 60 percent in 2013/14, a year when Argentina was unable to meet Brazil's import needs.

If Brazil were to implement a duty free wheat TRQ of 750,000 metric tons, U.S. trade opportunities would increase. Even under a conservative scenario, if U.S. suppliers receive only half of the annual allocation, more stable sales under the TRQ would increase competitiveness and result in approximately \$75 million in annual U.S. wheat sales at today's prices. Under the 2008 duty free TRQ, the U.S. exported 907,000 MT of wheat. In 2013/14, the U.S. exported 4.3 MMT and in 2014/15 exports totaled 1.5 MMT. When a temporary quota has been implemented, the United States has been the major beneficiary. A 2013 study funded by USW estimated Brazil's failure to implement the TRQ caused a \$1.3 billion loss to the U.S. wheat industry between 1997 and 2012.

Brazil sometimes encourages wheat production through trade distorting domestic subsidies. Ensuring that spending complies with WTO commitments could result in lower production, which would provide increased trade opportunities to U.S. producers.

An econometric study conducted by Iowa State University economists using the CARD-FAPRI model estimated that removing product-specific subsidies for wheat in Brazil would increase U.S. farm gate revenue by \$23 million and increase net exports from the U.S. by 35,000 tons relative to a baseline scenario.

Furthermore, Brazil's PEPRO program can act as an export subsidy that undercuts U.S. producers in other markets. Brazil's WTO export subsidy limit is zero.

Reducing the merchant marine tax to a level that only covers the cost of the service would help make U.S. wheat more competitive against Mercosur-origin wheat, increasing U.S. wheat sales by some degree.

Increased competitiveness from Brazil's compliance to domestic support spending, ensuring no export subsidies are used, eliminating the MMRT, as well as full implementation of a TRQ could add between \$100 and \$500 million in annual U.S. wheat sales. At times when West Coast wheat prices might be competitive to Brazil, those shipments could lead to an additional economic gain of \$5 to \$25 million without the SPS prohibitions.

## **CANADA**

**Market Access.** Canada has a number of policies in place that put U.S. wheat imports at a competitive disadvantage. Canada maintains that the policies are necessary to ensure that foreign grain is not misrepresented as Canadian grain in third-party countries.

The primary market access barrier to Canada is that regardless of variety, all foreign grown grain automatically receives the lowest designation in the official grading system. This has a negative impact on export opportunities to Canada as it results in de facto segregation. Even if the wheat is an approved Canadian variety and of high quality, the result is the same. This puts U.S. grown wheat at a serious disadvantage as it does not have equivalent access to Canada's bulk handling system.

The variety registration system (VRS) is also overly burdensome, involving criteria unrelated to quality or marketing to achieve a class designation. This restrictive process of registering U.S. wheat varieties in Canada is not a practical solution. Of current U.S. wheat acres, 36 percent of HRS in North Dakota and 1 percent in Montana are planted to varieties registered in Canada. Likewise, 4.4 percent of HRW in ND and 5.6 percent of HRW in MT are planted to varieties registered in Canada.

**Impact.** Canada's foreign grain designation and varietal registration system have been ongoing concerns as Canada transitioned to an open market. While U.S. producers have the option to market high quality grain directly to processors through various contract specifications, the system precludes equivalent use of the bulk storage, handling and distribution facilities in Canada, resulting in a competitive disadvantage. This barrier has remained in place for a number of years despite Canadian wheat receiving market-based and equitable classification in the United States.

While the market demand in Canada for U.S. wheat is not large, the U.S. is Canada's largest wheat customer, and equitable border treatment should be a high priority on both sides of the border. Removal of these trade barriers could result in U.S. producers delivering U.S. grown wheat into Canada's bulk handling system if market forces were allowed to function properly. While difficult to estimate, we believe that the current policies result in a loss of up to \$50 million in trade opportunities and note that these policies have a disproportionate effect on producers in Northern tier states. In fact, we estimate that more than 3 MMT of wheat in Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota is within 50 miles of a Canadian elevator, including 25 percent of North Dakota's wheat production.

## **CHINA**

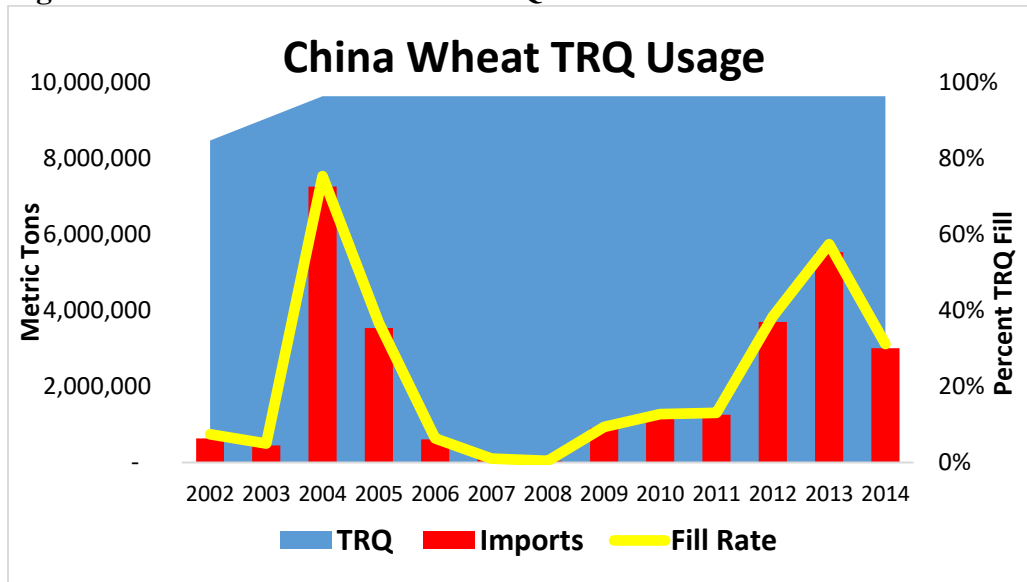
### **Market Access.**

China committed to an annual 9.64 million metric ton (MMT) tariff rate quota (TRQ) with one percent duty when it joined the WTO. Ninety percent of the TRQ is reserved for imports by state trading entities (STEs), with ten percent of the quota allocated to private sector importers. A series of transparency and reallocation requirements in China's accession protocol, if adhered to, should ensure a reasonably functioning TRQ process.

As a rule, private importers have used their TRQ fully in recent years, as foreign wheat is attractive from quality and price points of view. This has meant any re-allocated quota in recent years, must come from the 90 percent STE portion, most of which has not been used. But, the reallocation of the vast majority of unused TRQ never occurs. China's failure to abide by its WTO commitments related to administration of the wheat TRQ is reflected in low TRQ utilization rates. In most years, TRQ utilization has been about one third of total TRQ volume, and in some years has dropped to even lower levels.



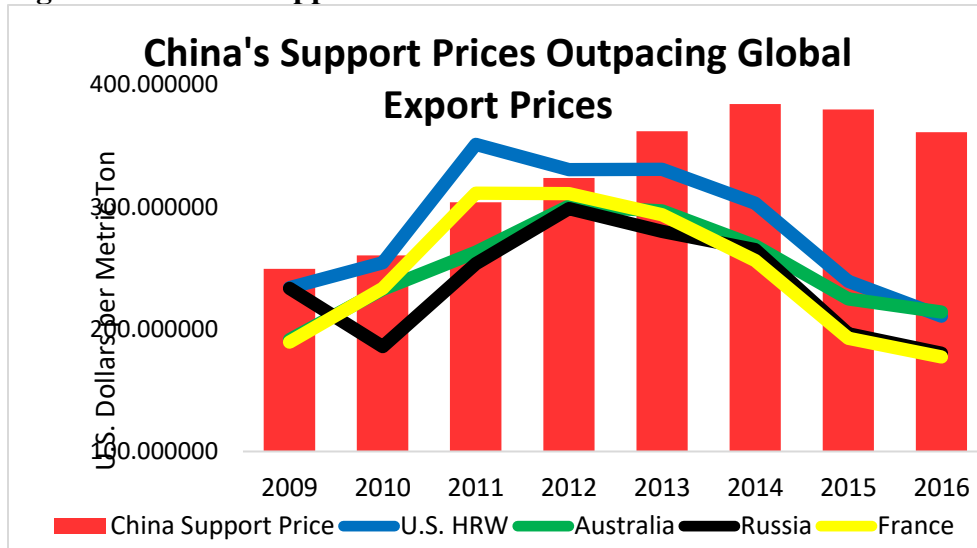
**Figure 1: Chinese Wheat Tariff Rate Quota Utilization**



Of course, the WTO does not require that TRQs fill every year. TRQ fill rates *should* depend on market conditions. But this low utilization rate has taken place in spite of the fact that Chinese wheat prices, which closely track China’s price support for wheat of around \$10 per bushel, are consistently far higher than international wheat prices. For example, in marketing year 2015/16, average Chinese wheat prices were more than 40 percent higher than the average export price out of Portland plus the cost of shipping to Chinese ports. In the absence of the restrictions that China imposes through TRQ administration, the United States and other suppliers would be selling large quantities of wheat to China, putting TRQ utilization at or near 100 percent.

As Figure 2 shows, there is no reason in recent years why Chinese importers would choose not to import wheat when the Chinese support price has been so much higher than global market prices.

**Figure 2: Chinese Support Price vs. Global Market Prices**



China's failure to reallocate unused STE import licenses to private importers and the restrictions it has placed on use of the private sector portion of the wheat TRQ are clear violations of the commitments China made when it joined the WTO. This includes China's WTO market access commitments for wheat related to TRQ administration, described above, as well as specific provisions of the Protocol (Annex 1A.IV.1, Tariff Rate Quotas) and China's Working Party Report (Section 4.7, Tariff Rate Quotas).

**Domestic Subsidies.** China notified domestic subsidy levels upon accession to the WTO in 2001, binding their Aggregate Measure of Support (AMS) at zero. China's accession agreement specifies a *de minimis* threshold of 8.5 percent of the value of production for use in China's AMS calculation formula.

China's minimum support prices, input subsidies, and product-specific payments to producers have increased significantly in recent years, resulting in higher domestic support that likely exceeds their AMS commitment. For wheat specifically, initial calculations indicate support from various amber box programs exceeds the 8.5 percent *de minimis* level, resulting in non-compliance with China's domestic support commitments. A DTB Associates analysis for 2014/15 estimates that market price support and other product-specific supports for wheat result in an AMS for wheat ranging from \$15.4 billion to \$18.4 billion, versus a *de minimis* threshold of only \$4.3 billion. Looking at wheat alone, China appears to be in violation of its WTO subsidy obligations, since its AMS spending limit is zero.

The minimum procurement price for wheat had increased annually through 2014. In 2015 & 2016 it was held flat, compared to U.S. farm gate prices which dropped 50 percent between 2014 and 2016 (cf. Table 1). Similar to other countries, China uses a flawed methodology for its price support calculations by only counting commodities actually purchased for public stocks, instead of all production, which clearly benefits from the artificially supported price.

**Table 1: Chinese Domestic Average Market Support Prices, 2006-16**

Year	Support Price (RMB/MT)	Support Price (USD/MT)	External Reference Price (RMB/MT)
2006	1,400	175.66	1,698
2007	1,400	184.21	1,698
2008	1,490	214.69	1,698
2009	1,700	249.13	1,698
2010	1,760	260.35	1,698
2011	1,930	298.67	1,698
2012	2,040	323.62	1,698
2013	2,240	361.87	1,698
2014	2,360	383.74	1,698
2015	2,360	381.38	1,698
2016	2,360	353.64	1,698

Under the terms of the accession agreement, China is not allowed to use the exemption under Article 6.2 of the Agreement on Agriculture that allows developing countries to exclude subsidies to resource poor farmers from its AMS calculation. This results in a straightforward domestic support calculation.

USW strongly supports the dispute launched by USTR against China's market price support programs on September 13, 2016. The action is the most significant taken by the U.S. government to date in addressing the imbalances caused by subsidies that violate WTO commitments.

**Value Added Tax.** China's value added tax (VAT) administration creates an additional barrier to this growing market. China is obliged under GATT Article III to ensure that discrimination between domestic and imported goods does not occur. Analysis indicates that conformity has not been achieved for wheat and that imports are assessed a 13 percent VAT upon entry while domestically produced wheat sold by farmers is exempt from the VAT at the first point of sale. In addition, VAT exemptions on STE imports upon entry are also a concern as it provides a 13 percent advantage over private importers.

Chinese officials also routinely state that STEs must operate on commercial terms, but the commercial market is not equal with the private sector when a VAT exemption exists for STEs at the point of entry on imported wheat. USW does not believe that China has satisfied its VAT commitments, resulting in higher priced private sector imports than should be realized.

A 2004 dispute settlement case on VAT in the semi-conductor industry between the United States and China illustrated the discrepancy between imported and domestic products. The two countries achieved a resolution for equal VAT treatment of imported and domestic semi-conductors without going to formal WTO dispute settlement. We encourage greater discussion on the VAT application to ensure fair treatment on imported and domestic wheat.

**SPS Measures.** China's government agencies are constantly introducing new regulations and updating existing regulations, including those dealing with toxins, pesticide usage and maximum residue limits (MRLs), as part of an effort to conform to WTO requirements for clear and transparent trade rules while aggressively protecting Chinese agricultural production and responding to greater consumer concern about the safety of food available in China.

*SPS-Traceability.* There is increasing concern about precedent-setting requirements for inspection and certification of origin (traceability) for agricultural products by government authorities in exporting countries. Such a requirement for wheat will reduce trade efficiency and increase costs, as wheat shipments often originate from more than one growing region. Different origins are blended at export facilities to meet buyers' specific quality requirements and to supply the large volumes needed for a single vessel, meaning that if it were even possible there would be high costs for documenting the specific origin of wheat in each shipment.

*SPS-TCK.* The General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) maintains a list of over 80 quarantine pest items, including *tilletia controversa* Kuhn

(TCK) and Karnal bunt (KB). Despite a bilateral agricultural cooperation agreement signed between China and the U.S. in 1999, China disregards the terms of the agreement which allow TCK levels of up to 30,000 spores per 50 grams in a composite sample collected, inspected, and certified by USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) or its officially designated inspection agent.

The agreement specifically allows discharge of U.S. wheat vessels at any port in China with expeditious delivery to buyers and processors without additional treatment. U.S. wheat that Chinese officials claim contains TCK must discharge at one designated southern port and a cleaning fee is assessed. The cleaning expense is estimated by different contacts at between RMB 60-80/MT (approximately \$9-12/MT). Although market values for U.S. soft white wheat is often competitive with other origins, including Chinese domestic wheat, importers have limited purchases because of potential discharge issues and the additional costs and burden to re-ship wheat from the cleaning facility. Perhaps because China's actions regarding TCK are in violation of the 1999 agreement, AQSIQ has not made known the rules they apply for TCK, which means that U.S. exporters are not able to minimize the TCK risk for importers.

The U.S. conducted research in conjunction with Chinese scientists that resulted in the agreed upon spore level. Secondary research, in which China voluntarily elected not to participate even at the invitation and encouragement of the U.S., confirms that in environments similar to those of China's agricultural areas, TCK cannot be established.

*SPS-Mycotoxin - Vomitoxin (DON)*. In 2004 the Ministry of Health implemented a requirement limiting the mycotoxin deoxynivalenol (DON) in wheat to 1.0 part per million (ppm). This is one of the strictest specifications in the world and the tightest requirement among Asian markets. China's concern, similar to other countries, is with the level of DON in foodstuffs for human consumption. However, Codex recommends a tolerance of 2.0 ppm in wheat for milling and food consumption. The U.S. does not place a limit on DON in wheat, but the FDA has established an advisory level of 1.0 ppm in finished food products. This FDA policy takes into account that cleaning and milling wheat can reduce the presence of DON by around 50 percent, so 2.0 ppm wheat can usually be milled into processed flour with a DON level below 1.0 ppm. However, China's regulatory requirement forces contract language to show 1.0 ppm maximum. In years where DON is widespread, U.S. exporters can only supply wheat with low DON levels at a much higher price that may not be competitive with other origins or China's domestic wheat.

*SPS-Weed Seeds*. Rules administered by AQSIQ covering weed seeds, such as johnsongrass and jointed goat grass, discourage buyers from importing wheat that may contain these weed seeds, despite these weeds being present in China. Complicating the weed seed issue is the lack of a documented transparent national control program for weed seeds. For both weed seeds and TCK, processors voice discouragement as Chinese officials require destroying tailings and waste, and the supervision procedure is complicated and costly.

*SPS-Inspection Practices*. The practice of preliminary inspection at anchorage and a more thorough sampling and inspection during discharge, along with the requirement to hold commodities in storage until final clearance, delays the processing and delivery of shipments and results in additional costs to importers. Buyers also incur interest charges on delayed shipments,

which result from special handling and treatment requirements after discharge. In addition, the methods of sample collection for vessel lots are not statistically or scientifically representative, depending on procedures employed, and enforcement of zero tolerance is the general practice.

Government organizations such as the National Health and Family Planning Commission (formerly Ministry of Health), Ministry of Agriculture, and AQSIQ oversee rules and regulations relating to SPS matters. These agencies routinely issue notifications of new rules, regulations and laws, which set unrealistically short comment periods for both domestic and foreign interests. The draft requirements appear to be generally adapted without consideration of scientifically backed concerns and practical aspects of trade and logistics. Often times the implementation of the rules, regulations and laws are delayed or fall into gray areas as their concrete enforcement is not initially feasible. This period of time creates a lack of transparency and discourages importers who undertake considerable financial risk if officials enforce the rules as they are written.

**Impact.** Ensuring the agreed upon rules for U.S. producers in China are consistently followed would increase the sales potential of U.S. wheat. If China abides by its domestic support commitments, production would likely decrease, increasing wheat trade opportunities. This would result in a market signal to farmers in the United States and the world to increase production to meet China's demand.

Full and transparent reallocation of TRQ to the private sector would result in greater fill rates by creating opportunities for private buyers to purchase U.S. wheat at the one-percent in quota duty, potentially increasing sales of high quality U.S. wheat. Full TRQ utilization at the U.S. long-term market share of 36 percent would result in nearly 3.5 MMT of annual exports, well above the 10-year average of roughly 0.76 MMT. This equates to an additional \$620 million in U.S. wheat exports each year at today's prices.

Additionally, a fair application of China's VAT would create a more level playing field for U.S. wheat imports versus Chinese domestic wheat as a 13 percent VAT difference at today's prices is a significant added cost.

USW estimates lost export tonnage to be as much as 500,000 MT of SRW sales annually because of the DON requirement and perhaps 300,000 MT of SW sales because of TCK, which combined translate to \$100 to \$500 million of lost exports using current prices.

An econometric study conducted by Iowa State University economists using the CARD-FAPRI model estimated that removing product-specific subsidies for wheat in China – without assuming changes in TRQ administration or other issues – would increase U.S. farm gate revenue by \$653 million and increase net exports from the U.S. by 1.5 million tons relative to a baseline scenario.

Resolving these issues would improve China's trade policy compliance to WTO obligations. The result would improve U.S. wheat exports opportunities and likely result in more consistent annual export volumes. This would add economic returns to U.S. producers that could easily exceed \$500 million in additional wheat exports each year.

The wheat industry strongly supported the two dispute settlement cases (DS 511 and DS 517) brought against China last year for its market price support programs and improper administration of TRQs respectively. If China complied with its market access commitment in marketing year 2015/16 it likely would have been the third largest importer in the world instead of the 16<sup>th</sup>, and in a region where U.S. wheat is extremely competitive. The price support case was needed because it addressed the root cause of the border problems; this was the most significant action taken by the U.S. government to date in addressing the imbalances caused by subsidies that violate WTO commitments.

## EUROPEAN UNION

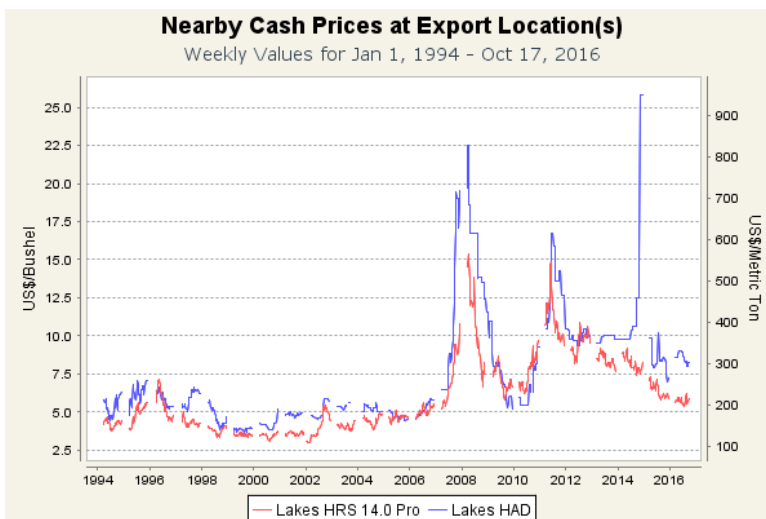
**Market Access.** The European Union (EU) is collectively the largest producer of wheat in the world. However, it is also a regular importer of U.S. wheat, purchasing 838,000 metric tons in 2015/16. Two classes of U.S. wheat, Hard Red Spring (HRS) and durum, are imported under the EU margin of preference program (MOP). The MOP applies duties to wheat imports valued below an intervention price of €101.31 per metric ton times 1.55, or approximately \$172 per metric ton at the current exchange rate. USDA's Long Term Baseline Projections issued in February 2016 show farm-level wheat prices dropping to around \$162/MT in 2016/17. If correct, that price range could trigger EU import levies on HRS and durum despite durum's price premium that would place it above the threshold.

Durum and HRS wheat are distinct classes of wheat that are not substitutable. Virtually all durum is used to make semolina for the pasta industry, while HRS is used as a blending wheat for breads, pizza, and flour. The price of durum is usually above the price paid for HRS, as demonstrated in the chart.

Traditionally, the EU calculated durum and HRS duties separately, based on the world market prices of each class.

However, in early 2014, the EU unilaterally implemented a policy of calculating durum duties based solely on HRS prices, due in part to what the EU claims is an inability to obtain consistent durum prices.

Clearly, treating durum the same as HRS is not an accurate reflection of its value. And this new methodology will result in duties being applied to durum imports when HRS prices fall, likely decreasing the amount of durum purchased by European importers and undermining U.S. durum producers in that market. In 2015/16, the durum market traded at a premium to HRS of 40 percent and over the long term has been priced at about a 25 percent premium.



**Biotechnology.** The U.S. wheat industry is particularly concerned with continued resistance by the EU towards imports of genetically modified (GM) food. The EU has a labeling tolerance of 0.9 percent for approved events and a zero-tolerance for unapproved events for food. The lack of a low level presence tolerance can and has resulted in market disruption for some commodities. The EU does not have a functioning regulatory system for biotechnology approvals, and several submitted biotech events remain unapproved long after being approved and going into production in non-EU countries. Additionally, the EU has now made it possible for member countries to ban domestic cultivation of biotech crops for non-scientific reasons, which is highly worrying for the future of biotech acceptance and is counter to scientific regulatory principles. A total of 19 out of the 28 member states have decided to opt-out of GM crop cultivation in all or part of their territories. While the decision does not affect current GM cultivation in the EU, it does indicate that the technology will continue to have trouble gaining traction in the EU.

**Karnal Bunt.** The EU does not accept APHIS certification for Karnal bunt (KB), stating that the APHIS bunted kernel standard for KB does not provide adequate risk protection. Many EU countries, especially the UK and Greece, aggressively sample U.S. wheat to test for KB spores. The delay and uncertainty of spore testing of U.S. wheat is known to encourage buyers to seek wheat from other origins, mainly Canada, even though both the U.S. and Canada primarily ship wheat to the EU from Great Lakes ports. The EU is believed to be the only group of countries that questions the sufficiency of the APHIS bunted kernel method for certifying KB. The KB affected area has gradually dwindled since it was found in the 1990's, and KB is now only found in a few counties in Arizona. In the nearly 15 years since KB was first found in the U.S., there has been no case where KB has emerged elsewhere in the world as a result of U.S. wheat imports and there has been no confirmed case of KB contamination of a U.S. wheat shipment. Nevertheless, APHIS and its EU counterpart have exhaustively exchanged scientific views on this issue with no progress having been made in getting the EU to modify its views on the risks posed by KB and the basis for APHIS certification.

**Mycotoxins - Vomitoxin (DON).** The EU has destination sampling and testing requirements for vomitoxin (deoxynivalenol or DON) and ochratoxin in imported wheat shipments. Wheat and other grains are normally traded on the basis of certification of quality at loading. FGIS offers official testing services for both these mycotoxins, but the EU has not accepted that the rapid methods approved by FGIS are substantially equivalent to the method they require or that FGIS sampling is sufficiently intensive. Testing at destination, where the shipper can no longer address any problems found, creates uncertainty and risk and may delay delivery, effects which add costs and thus discourage sales. FGIS requested European Commission (EC) recognition of FGIS sampling and testing methods for vomitoxin and ochratoxin in U.S. wheat exports. However, this request was denied because the EC viewed FGIS as providing insufficient control over the potential pathways for mycotoxins entering wheat shipments, even though FGIS is merely requesting that its tests be recognized when a wheat shipment is accompanied by an appropriate FGIS certificate.

This issue was further complicated in the spring of 2016 when portions of two vessels, one of which FGIS certified as meeting the EU DON limit, were rejected based on testing conducted by Italian authorities. FGIS later confirmed that the initial results on the vessel they certified were in error. According to contacts within the Italian trade, the Italian authorities subsequently

intensified their testing of US wheat shipments for DON, further exacerbating the effects described above. The measures taken by Italian authorities have not been publicly announced and reportedly apply only to US wheat shipments. These two unusual rejection events notwithstanding, the EU mycotoxin testing regime remains excessively discouraging to US wheat shipments and disproportionate considering the long history of US wheat meeting EU requirements and the ability of FGIS to address the recent issues that have occurred. It would have been more appropriate for EU or Italian officials to discuss the situation with FGIS and try to arrive at practices that would be less trade disruptive than the measures being adopted.

**Hazard-Based Analysis.** The EU increasingly approaches SPS regulations through a hazard-based approach, that is identifying potential hazards and banning them, regardless of the actual risk of exposure. Without science-based risk assessments that meet international standards, the EU risks disrupting trade in agricultural products and violating its WTO commitments. At the moment, the hazard-based analyses have been primarily applied to imported products, but there is substantial risk that the EU will choose to prohibit residues of pesticides subject to risk-based analysis in the U.S. that are banned as hazards in the EU. This could have serious repercussions for this over \$300 million export market.

**Italian Location Labelling Requirement.** In May 2017, the Italian government requested permission from the EC to implement a proposed decree that would require package labels for pasta sold in Italy to disclose the location of cultivation for the durum used to make the pasta. Currently, Italian semolina millers and pasta manufacturers use durum from a wide variety of locations, including the United States, and can blend and mix durum in whatever combination is needed to meet product quality specifications. In July 2017, Italy announced that it would implement this policy without first receiving permission from the EC. This will add significant costs to Italian companies trying to implement the policy, and will likely lead to a reduction of durum imports from the United States.

**Impact.** HRS prices have not yet reached a level that would trigger MOP duties since this price threshold policy has been in place. However, artificially increased prices for imports from the U.S. could lead European importers to look to sources within the EU-28 or countries with more favorable market access arrangements. If HRS prices were to drop to the average levels predicted for wheat prices in USDA's most recent Long Term Baseline Projections, import duties would likely be triggered on durum with some frequency, even if actual durum prices are consistently above the trigger level. The application of a duty based on the average HRS price could result in the loss of roughly \$100-150 million in annual durum sales for U.S. wheat producers.

The EU-28 as a group is a large wheat importer, with imports of around 6.0 MMT each year. Based on EU-28 imports as well as disruptions that occur with importing countries that re-export food product to the EU, there is a large economic incentive to overcome SPS and standards barriers with the EU. New hazard-based restrictions, such as on endocrine disruptors, could potentially have an effect of \$100 to \$500 million.

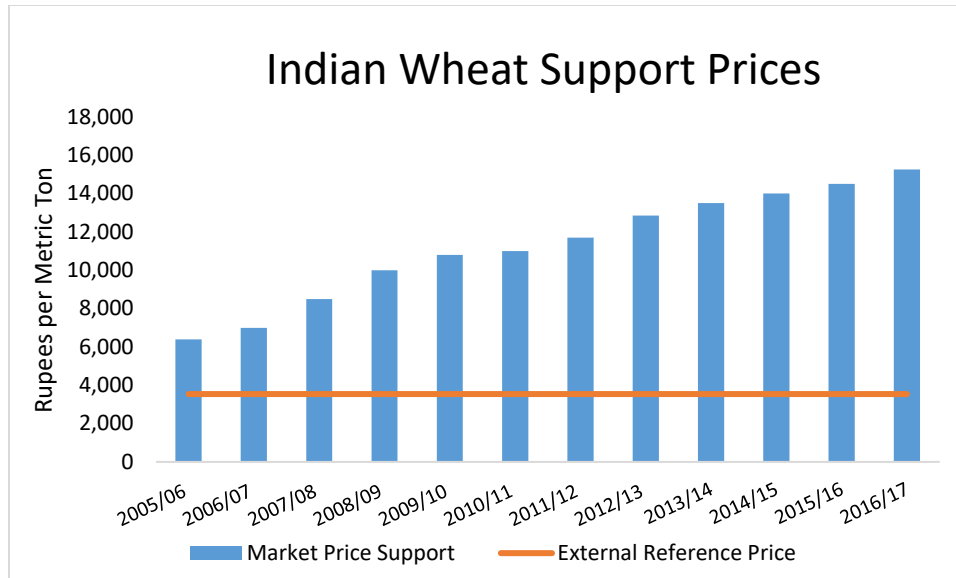


## INDIA

**Domestic Subsidies.** Every WTO member nation committed to trade distorting domestic subsidy caps upon accession to the WTO, known as the aggregate measure of support (AMS). Countries also have caps on *de minimis* spending as a percentage of general and product specific production with developing nations, such as India, capped at 10 percent. In its most recent notification of domestic support programs, covering years 2004/05 through 2010/11, India *appeared* to be in compliance with its commitments. However, India used a flawed methodology when it reported that it never exceeded its AMS commitment of zero for any crop, as analysis conducted by DTB Associates demonstrates.

Using past notifications to the WTO and data contained in USDA country reports, DTB's analysis indicates India violates product specific subsidy limits on wheat with a wheat-specific AMS of \$12.4 billion, well above an estimated *de minimis* threshold of \$2.6 billion for 2013/14. Similar analysis indicates that India is exceeding price support commitments for other commodities, including rice, corn, and sugar. It is estimated that India's AMS for these four commodities is between \$36.1 and \$93.4 billion, while India's total AMS limit is zero.

<b>Marketing Year</b>	<b>Wheat Production</b>	<b>Govt. of India Procurement*</b>	<b>Market Support Price</b>	<b>External Reference Price</b>
(Apr–Mar)	(MMTs)	(MMT)	Rs/MT	Rs/MT
2005/06	68.64	14.79 (21.6)	6,400	3,540
2006/07	69.35	9.23 (13.3)	7,000	3,540
2007/08	75.81	11.13 (14.6)	8,500	3,540
2008/09	78.57	22.69 (28.9)	10,000	3,540
2009/10	80.68	25.38 (31.5)	10,800	3,540
2010/11	80.80	22.51 (27.8)	11,000	3,540
2011/12	86.87	28.33 (32.6)	11,700	3,540
2012/13	93.90	38.15 (40.6)	12,850	3,540
2013/14	92.46	25.09 (27.1)	13,500	3,540
2014/15	94.00	28.02 (29.8)	14,000	3,540
2015/16	87.00	28.09 (32.3)	14,500	3,540
2016/17	90.00	22.93 (25.4)	15,250	3,540
*Figure in parenthesis is GOI procurement as percentage of total production				
Source: USDA/FAS, India WTO Notifications and Food Corporation of India				



The chart above shows the increasing market support prices compared to the external reference price India agreed to when it joined the WTO. We have not uncovered a mechanism that allows India's government to not purchase wheat from producers at the minimum support price. As a result, stocks could rise rapidly and result in greater potential for India to release stocks and continue to break its export subsidy commitment on wheat.

If India actually believes that its public stockholding program should be counted in the green box, as it has notified, it would not have derailed the Bali agreement over finding a permanent solution to that program's violation of WTO commitments. The 2012 G-33 proposal to consider food security-related stockpiling to be green box has not been accepted by the other members of the WTO, and India should not be allowed to act as if it has. India should not only be pushed to submit timely notifications in the future, but to submit notifications that reflect reality. As the second largest wheat producer in the world, India's AMS spending needs to be monitored and U.S. negotiators should address this issue through the WTO.

Furthermore, the market price support program leads to direct distortions in international markets based on the size of the Indian wheat crop and domestic prices in a given year. In recent years, when stocks were deemed too large, India has provided export subsidies to dispose of surplus wheat. In the current year, when the domestic market prices are attracting imports of less expensive wheat to fill gaps between demand and supply, the government has raised tariffs to keep foreign wheat out, first to 10 percent, then 25 percent, and most recently back to 10 percent. Any wheat export subsidization will be a clear violation of its WTO commitments, as India agreed to a binding export subsidy commitment of zero as part of the Uruguay Round agreement.

**Impact.** High levels of domestic support provide an incentive to grow wheat when importing a small share of demand would be more economical to the country's consumers and growing more labor-intensive crops would make better use of the comparative advantages of Indian farmers. Compliance on trade distorting domestic subsidy spending would send better market signals and likely increase economic returns to U.S. producers and provide more trade opportunities.

Furthermore, ensuring compliance on domestic subsidies would eliminate India's periodic need to utilize export subsidies to remove excess wheat from its domestic market, creating a level playing field for U.S. wheat exporters. Competing with non-subsidized Indian wheat would result in higher market prices, creating better returns to all producers. In addition, compliance with trade distorting domestic support levels would shift production to other crops, providing new trade opportunities for wheat exporting countries.

A 2015 econometric study conducted by Iowa State University economists using the CARD-FAPRI model estimated that removing product-specific subsidies for wheat in India would increase U.S. farm gate revenue by \$358 million and increase net exports from the U.S. by 771,000 tons relative to a baseline scenario.

## **JAPAN**

**Market Access.** Japan uses a complicated system for the vast majority of its imports that is subject to a government monopoly. Duties on wheat imports are extraordinary high, amounting to around \$460 per metric ton (roughly double the current market price) for wheat imported by private buyers. The government is the only entity allowed to import duty-free, but imported wheat is subject to a markup of around \$140 per ton before being sold by the government to domestic millers. Funds raised by the markup are used to subsidize domestic wheat production with extraordinary price guarantees, currently around \$875 per ton (over 4 times higher than current U.S. wheat prices). While the U.S. currently has over 50 percent market share, the markup vastly increases domestic wheat product costs, which limits consumption of these products. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), if implemented, will eventually reduce the markup by 45 percent, but wheat products will remain artificially expensive for Japanese consumers while fostering uncompetitive domestic production. [With U.S. withdrawal from TPP, this 45 percent reduction would likely only apply to wheat imports from Canada and Australia if those countries implement a so-called TPP-11 agreement along with Japan.](#)

**Biotechnology.** Japan has been vocal in its unwillingness to accept wheat produced through biotechnology. USW urges the U.S. government to continue working with their Japanese counterparts to ensure that regulations and approvals are based on scientific facts.

Japan began testing all U.S. wheat shipments for biotech wheat presence in 2013 after USDA announced the finding of regulated biotech wheat material in the Pacific Northwest. USDA thoroughly investigated the incident and concluded that it was an isolated event and that there is no biotech wheat in commercial channels. USDA reached the same conclusions in an investigation into the finding of regulated biotech material at a Montana research site in 2014 and after a fact-finding mission in 2016 conducted in response to the finding of a different regulated biotech material in the Pacific Northwest. Continued testing increases costs and creates uncertainty for buyers who may conclude that purchases from other origins have less risk. USW believes the USDA investigation conclusion warrants the discontinuation of testing by Japanese authorities.

**Mycotoxins - Vomitoxin (DON).** Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) sets a maximum vomitoxin (deoxynivalenol or DON) level of 1.1 parts per million (PPM). Since this

level must be met on destination testing, it results in many contracts setting a specification below this level to ensure a result lower than 1.1 ppm. This is one of the tighter DON specifications in the world. Codex recommends a tolerance of 2 ppm in wheat for milling and food consumption. The U.S. does not place a limit on DON in wheat, but the FDA has established an advisory level of 1 ppm in finished food products. This FDA policy takes into account the fact that the cleaning and milling of wheat can reduce the presence of DON by around 50 percent, so 2 ppm wheat can usually be milled into processed flour with a DON level below 1 ppm. In years where DON is widespread, U.S. exporters can only supply wheat with low DON levels at a much higher price.

**Impact.** Japan is routinely the top buyer of U.S. wheat, purchasing over 3.0 MMT each year, which is worth well over \$500 million. The U.S. wheat industry has worked very closely with the Japanese milling industry to ensure minimal market disruption due to unanticipated biotech events. Assistance in streamlining Japan's MRLs would provide U.S. producers more options in managing the production and storage of their wheat crop each year. In addition, it is critical that Japan utilizes scientific techniques for approving new biotech products and setting tolerances.

## **KENYA**

**Flag Smut.** Kenya began enforcing long-standing flag smut restrictions on U.S. wheat exports in 2006. This problem was partially resolved by USDA's APHIS, which was able to certify shipments from areas other than the West Coast ports to be free of flag smut. While this allowed trade to resume, there have been good price opportunities for shipments to originate from the West Coast. Growers and shippers in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) states were disappointed that they are excluded from the Kenyan market. Further efforts in 2008, 2009 and 2013 between APHIS and KEPHIS made progress on this issue, and Kenyan authorities gave preliminary approval to concepts that were drafted by APHIS into a protocol that would have effectively removed the restriction. However, KEPHIS subsequently failed to accept the protocol, and the issue remains unresolved.

Kenya's SPS issues also impact U.S. wheat exports from the PNW to Uganda. Uganda does not have a flag smut ban on West Coast exports, but since importers in Uganda generally use Kenyan port facilities, they must abide by the requirement for Kenya.

**Impact.** The total import market for these two countries averages over 1.6 million metric tons (MMT). There are times when U.S. wheat exports from the PNW are more competitive than those from the Gulf of Mexico and the ability to ship from both ports could increase U.S. wheat market share. U.S. market share in Kenya is low, but even a five-percent rise in market share would be worth over \$20 million to the U.S. wheat industry.

## **KOREA**

**Biotechnology.** Korea has been vocal in their unwillingness to accept wheat produced through biotechnology. USW urges the U.S. government to continue working with their Korean counterparts to ensure that regulations are based on scientific facts.

Korea began testing all U.S. wheat shipments for biotech wheat presence in 2013 after USDA announced the finding of regulated biotech wheat material in the Pacific Northwest. These testing requirements were eventually reduced after the receipt of the final USDA report as well as Korea's test results indicating no presence of biotech wheat in U.S. export shipments. After a similar finding of biotech wheat in a fallow field in 2016 Korea held shipments and instituted a strict testing protocol. USDA's 2013 investigation and 2016 fact-finding missions concluded that both were isolated events and that there is no biotech wheat in commercial channels. Continued testing delays shipments, which increases costs and creates uncertainty for buyers who may conclude that purchases from other origins have less risk. USW believes the USDA should work closely with Korean authorities and industry to eliminate the testing requirement.

**Mycotoxins - Vomitoxin (DON).** Mycotoxin inspection for wheat began in 2010 with a vomitoxin (deoxynivalenol or DON) limit of 1 part per million (ppm), zearalenone - 200 ppb, aflatoxin - 15 ppb and ochratoxin A - 5 ppb. The mycotoxin of most concern to the wheat industry is DON. The Korean limit would be stricter than the 2 ppm level recommended by Codex. The U.S. does not place a limit on DON in wheat, but the FDA has established an advisory level of 1 ppm in finished food products. This FDA policy takes into account the fact that cleaning and milling wheat can reduce the presence of DON by around 50 percent, so 2 ppm wheat can usually be milled into processed flour with a DON level below 1 ppm. In years where DON is widespread, U.S. exporters can only supply wheat with low DON levels at a much higher price, raising concern that Korean importers will look to cheaper origins. Implementation of a 1 ppm maximum by Korea should be justified by scientific measures.

**Heavy Metals - Cadmium.** Korea has imposed 0.2 ppm limits on lead and cadmium in wheat, limits also adopted by Codex. Korea reportedly began testing for these metals in July 2010. These metals are present in wheat not because of contamination but are taken up from the soil by the growing wheat plant and occur at some level in wheat from all origins. The U.S. EPA does not set limits for minerals that occur naturally in foods. While neither limit should normally be a problem, U.S. wheat could occasionally exceed a 0.2 ppm limit.

**Glyphosate.** Korea's Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) recently established a maximum residue limit (MRL) of 5 ppm for glyphosate residues in wheat. The comparable U.S. and Codex MRL is 30 ppm. Monsanto submitted data to justify establishing an MRL of 10 ppm, which is the same limit established by the EU. However, MFDS arbitrarily selected the lower value of 5 ppm without providing an explanation or justification for why the limit supported by the submitted data was not acceptable.

**Impact.** The Korean market has been important to U.S. wheat farmers with exports averaging about 1.3 MMT each year, resulting in a average export value of around \$460 million. Any disruption in U.S. exports due to SPS measures would be lost directly to Australia or Canada.

## **MEXICO**

**Soil Contamination.** Rail shipments of various grains have been delayed upon entry into Mexico because inspectors claim to have found soil contamination in the shipments. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the U.S. grain industry have been in

discussions with their Mexican counterparts to try to resolve this issue. In addition, the Mexican Association of Agricultural Product Suppliers (APPAMEX) has submitted a proposal to the North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO) to assess and revise tolerance levels for soil. Mexico has not established clear guidance for how inspections are to be conducted or what amount of soil contamination is not allowed. There appears to be variation in how shipments are handled depending on the port of entry. The inspectors' practices result in added costs for fumigation treatment and uncertainty for the processors waiting to receive the grain.

**Impact.** Mexico is one of the largest importers of U.S. wheat, regularly importing around 3.0 MMT, averaging close to \$1 billion annually. USDA estimated \$6 million in annual costs due to soil contamination measures at railroad crossings between the United States and Mexico. Wheat comprised less than 20 percent of soil detections.

## **MOROCCO**

**Market Access.** The U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has done little to increase U.S. wheat exports to Morocco, a market traditionally dominated by the European Union. In 2014, only 9,000 MT of the quota was allocated. No preferential FTA sales occurred in 2012 or 2013 and the tender for the TRQ in February 2015 went completely unfilled. While Morocco tendered three times in 2016 and filled 504,757 MT, this was due to a unique confluence of variables; namely, a catastrophic crop failure in Morocco, extremely low prices in the Black Sea that Morocco would want to prevent from hurting domestic production, and a weak crop in Europe. The TRQ should be able to work as well during normal years and not just in extreme circumstances.

The FTA does not contain strong assurances to fully utilize the TRQ preference for U.S. wheat, requiring some other mechanism to ensure an adequate TRQ fill rate. This is a weakness in the FTA because Morocco has no incentive to ensure the TRQ is filled. Morocco usually tenders for the entire TRQ amount at the beginning of the year in January or February, when U.S. wheat is not price competitive; this year's exception was due to their poor harvest in August. The EU currently holds 60 percent of the Moroccan wheat market share, while the U.S. holds an average of around seven percent of the market. An administrative change that would require retendering of unfilled quota or left the quota open on a first-come first-served basis would address this problem. USW also encourages efforts to explore an institutionalized tender schedule. Instituting a tender schedule could help ONICL and importers plan their annual purchases and likely result in better utilization of the TRQs.

Further complications to the FTA involve the rounding of the allocated TRQ imports to the nearest 5,000 MT, making commercial imports of wheat from the United States (which are normally in minimum 25,000 MT shipments) more complicated for importers. Rounding the TRQ purchases to the closest 25,000 MT under the FTA would help importers avoid quota overruns with potentially very expensive duty implications applied to the over quota quantities.

**Impact.** There have been limited U.S. wheat sales to Morocco under the FTA agreement that should have reached about 717,000 MT during the 2015 calendar year. Instead, total imports from the United States in 2015 were around 10,000 MT, and none of those imports went through

the FTA TRQ. The difference in export value at today's prices is roughly \$200 million in lost sales for U.S. wheat producers. Greater cooperation with Morocco to fully utilize the TRQ created by the FTA, and not just in times of massive domestic production shortfalls, would be a major benefit to U.S. wheat producers.

The failure to uphold the spirit of the U.S.-Moroccan FTA creates a poor trading environment for U.S. wheat. We encourage the U.S. government to address the FTA challenges that limit U.S. wheat export opportunities.

## **TAIWAN**

**Maximum Residue Limits.** Taiwan's Department of Health (DOH) adopted an MRL of 1.5 ppm for malathion in 2009, well below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved tolerance of 8 ppm and the Codex limit of 10 ppm. DOH has justified keeping the low MRL because residues found in wheat imports have not exceeded that level. Samples from U.S. wheat exports rarely if ever have such a high residue of malathion, but higher residues certainly remain a risk given the U.S. limit. It remains troubling that DOH would adopt such a low MRL, one which is at odds with Codex, EPA, and nearly every other importing country.

While DOH has set workable MRL's for the pesticides most likely to be found on wheat, it reportedly still has a large backlog of pesticide reviews to conduct. Changing legislation so that Codex MRLs can be used by default in those cases where Taiwan has not completed a scientific review would bring the country into conformance with WTO requirements and remove the constant threat of trade disruptions resulting from the lack of MRLs for pesticides commonly used by many exporters.

**Impact.** Taiwan is a loyal customer, purchasing roughly 1.0 million metric tons (MMT) of U.S. wheat each year with an average value of more than \$350 million. The Canadian and Australian industries are actively pursuing this market and any disruption in trade with the U.S. would result in a market share loss to these two major competitors.

## **TURKEY**

**Domestic Subsidies.** Every WTO member nation committed to cap trade distorting domestic subsidies upon accession to the WTO, known as the aggregate measure of support (AMS). Countries also have caps on *de minimis* spending as a percentage of general and product specific production. Developing nations, such as Turkey are capped at 10 percent. While countries are required to report domestic support spending annually, Turkey has not notified domestic support spending to the WTO since its 2001 harvest. This lack of transparency is troubling since Turkey is one of the top 15 wheat producing countries and is routinely the largest exporter of wheat flour.

Based on past notifications to the WTO and data contained in USDA country reports, analysis conducted by DTB Associates indicates violations of product specific subsidy limits on wheat. Analysis of Turkey's support programs shows a wheat-specific AMS of \$5.7 billion in 2013, while Turkey's product specific *de minimis* limit was only \$0.63 billion. Turkey's AMS limit is

zero, so any spending above *de minimis* levels is prohibited. Support prices since 2001 are listed below (note that Turkey did not announce a support price for 2014 because their projected market prices were above their expected administered price level). Although the support price declined to its lowest level since 2007 this year, it is still approximately 40 percent higher than comparable U.S. futures prices. Turkey needs to be transparent and pushed to submit timely notifications. Its AMS spending needs to be carefully monitored and U.S. negotiators should address this issue through the WTO.

Minimum Purchase Prices for Anatolian Red Wheat (USD/MT)

Year	Minimum Purchase Price	External Reference Price
2001	\$159.26	\$98.50
2002	\$169.01	\$98.50
2003	\$240.18	\$98.50
2004	\$267.13	\$98.50
2005	\$266.34	\$98.50
2006	\$260.81	\$98.50
2007	\$325.47	\$98.50
2008	\$387.20	\$98.50
2009	\$330.07	\$98.50
2010	\$373.51	\$98.50
2011	\$366.40	\$98.50
2012	\$369.14	\$98.50
2013	\$356.34	\$98.50
2014	n/a	\$98.50
2015	\$322.70	\$98.50
2016	\$303.17	\$98.50

Source: TMO and OANDA exchange rate calculator

**Export Subsidies.** A highly protected domestic wheat market and an inward processing system (IPS) encouraging exports combine to provide substantial support to Turkey’s wheat flour export industry. Turkey’s wheat import tariff is bound at 180 percent and an import tax of 130 percent is currently applied on wheat, which effectively allows the domestic price to be above international prices. The import tax level varies each year based on domestic production levels, but is routinely set at one of the highest rates among all WTO member countries.

Turkey’s protectionist market access policies encourage subsidized flour sales as flour exporters receive a certificate to import duty-free wheat when flour is exported. These flour exports can be priced well below the market, resulting in unfairly priced flour exports that impact wheat exporters from all origins. Turkey’s flour export policy, including their IPS, needs to be examined as it results in trade distorting export flows and a loss in U.S. wheat exports in third countries.



The IPS requires Turkish millers to export flour before receiving certificates allowing an equivalent amount of wheat imports duty-free. Turkey has an obligation under the WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures to maintain a verification system related to the use of the IPS. It requires tracking *inter alia* how much product is imported and exported under the system, and checking that exported wheat is of the same characteristics and kind as wheat exported under the IPS. We have found no evidence of such a verification system. If Turkey does not maintain such a verification system, it is in violation of WTO rules.

Regarding the like characteristics obligation, Turkey only requires that imported and exported wheat fall under the same harmonized tariff schedule (HTS) code. Wheat has many different qualities and associated prices that result in this simplistic policy not meeting the ‘same characteristics and kind’ requirement. This allows the Turkish Grain Board (TMO) to sell lower quality wheat to millers below their acquisition price to be processed into flour for export, and then issue certificates allowing wheat imports duty free. These price differences provide a huge incentive to import higher quality and more expensive wheat when a miller can avoid a 130 percent tariff on that difference in price.

That incentive is demonstrated by the secondary market that exists for IPS certificates where millers can sell their duty free import rights to traders. The sale of those certificates breaks the import and export chain that should be linked under the IPS and acts as a subsidy to the exporting millers who gain a windfall profit from the revenue sales.

The clearest indication that Turkey is providing export subsidies is the sales of TMO stocks to millers at prices below the acquisition cost. USW has documented sales of wheat to millers contingent on the demonstration of an equivalent amount of flour exported. These sales prices were at least 15 percent lower than the TMO support prices, even prior to storage costs, meaning that TMO subsidized sales out of its stocks contingent on exports.

Turkey’s export subsidy allowance for wheat is 493,812 MT and \$27 million and for wheat flour is 56,178 MT and \$1.4 million (even these will go to zero when developing country export subsidy schedules expire in 2018 due to the WTO Nairobi Agreement). While wheat exports are relatively small and likely below the subsidy allowance, wheat flour exports are almost certainly exceeding Turkey’s export subsidy allowance by a substantial margin under the IPS.

Of most concern is that Turkish flour has been routinely arriving in the Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia and the Philippines at prices well below other flour export origins and domestic flour prices. Imports of Turkish flour by the Philippines were a wheat equivalent of 207,000 MT in calendar year 2013. In 2012, Turkish flour exports to Indonesia reached the wheat equivalent of 262,500 MT. In 2013, flour exports to Indonesia fell to the wheat equivalent of 95,000 MT due to a 20 percent safeguard duty imposed by Indonesia during the first half of that year.

In the Philippines, the Tariff Commission imposed anti-dumping duties in December 2014 at the request of the Philippine flour industry, averaging about 5 percent on Turkish exporters. Flour imports from Turkey were down 12 percent in 2015. Imports declined further (33 percent) in the

first half of 2016, but Turkey was still nearly three times as large as the next closest flour supplier (neighboring Vietnam).

It is a further concern that the instability in Turkey's traditional largest flour export markets, Syria and Iraq, is causing Turkish flour millers to look elsewhere. Those markets represent approximately 60 percent of Turkey's flour exports, but, according to a USDA GAIN report, the political and security problems mean that "Turkey is looking to increase its market share in Africa and South America." This highlights the difficulty – and perhaps futility – of attempting to address the problem of Turkish flour exports one importing country at a time.

**Impact.** High levels of domestic support and very high import tariffs provide an incentive to Turkey's producers to grow wheat when importing would be more economical. The main benefit to U.S. wheat producers from correcting these trade issues is less competition from Turkish wheat and flour in other markets. Eliminating unfair competition from cheap Turkish flour exports would increase returns to U.S. wheat producers by \$50 to \$100 million per year.

An econometric study conducted by Iowa State University economists using the CARD-FAPRI model estimated that removing product-specific subsidies for wheat in Turkey would increase U.S. farm gate revenue by \$172 million and increase net exports from the U.S. by 347,000 tons relative to a baseline scenario.

## VIETNAM

Vietnam had been a growing market for U.S. wheat for several years, and was particularly poised to grow with implementation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement. However, several months after the end of the TPP negotiations, Vietnam implemented a new trade restriction that has virtually shut down U.S. wheat imports into that country. A new regulation requiring methyl bromide fumigation for all wheat from the United States has ended a positive contribution to the trade balance of over \$50 million and growing in 2016, reducing it to almost nothing in recent months.

U.S. Wheat Associates appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to increase the competitiveness of U.S. wheat in the world and looks forward to further dialogue on these issues to increase U.S. wheat exports.