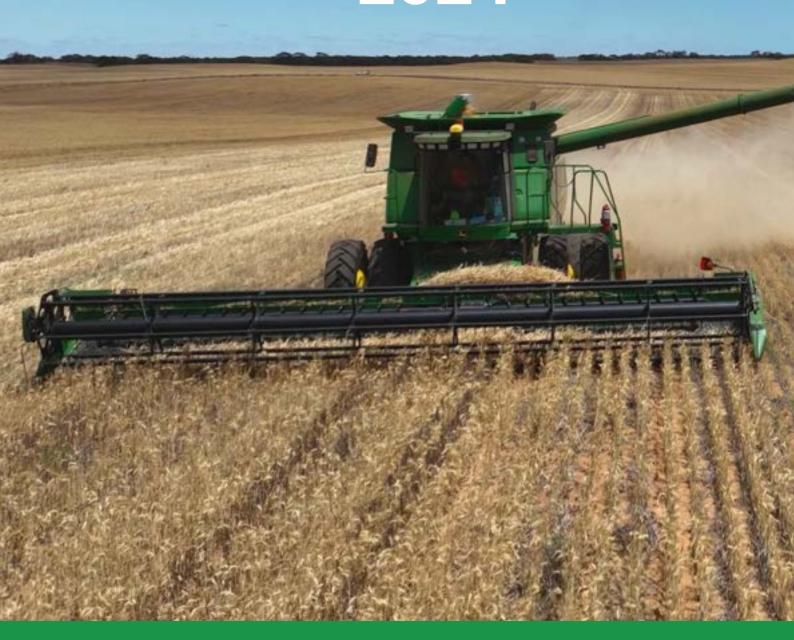


Annual Grain Producer Survey INSIGHT REPORT 2024



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Survey Overview

Between November 2024 and February 2025, 353 grain producers from around South Australia provided their feedback, insights and perspectives on the current state of their grain businesses, and their thoughts on the industry more broadly.

These growers, from all parts of the state, reflect a diverse mix of farm sizes and crops grown, and perspectives and priorities for the year ahead.

Unsurprisingly, the survey reflected a much more challenging season for most grain producers when compared to the previous two years. Drought and financial pressures were the dominant themes.

However, a strong sense of positivity about the future of the sector also emerged, and many comments pointed to the enhanced abilities of cropping businesses to navigate challenges, due in part to evolving farming practices and grain varieties.

The contributions summarised in the accompanying report are vitally important to helping Grain Producers SA continue to support all growers with important, emerging and persistent challenges, and to capitalise on the best opportunities.

All grower quotes are verbatim, with only light editing for spelling or grammar.

CEO Message

The Annual South Australian Grain Producer Survey is an important window into pressing, persisting and emerging matters that impact grain producers around the state. It paints a picture of how grain producers are feeling, how their businesses are performing, and what they most need support with.

There is no doubt that 2024 has been a very challenging year on multiple fronts for the state's grain sector. Weather pressures in the form of drought and frosts have had a significant impact on crop harvests, farm financial health, and the wellbeing of grain growing communities. Approximately half of the 353 survey respondents said they felt negative about the 2024 harvest, and a significant number indicated that they did not harvest a grain crop due to the difficult conditions. While drought-related matters dominated (80% of growers listing drought as one of their top challenges), almost 60% of respondents said they had also been adversely affected by frost in the past year.

The other significant challenge highlighted through the survey was the financial pressures of doing business in a climate of reduced incomes and rising operating costs. More than one third of respondents said they need financial assistance to navigate the current drought, and, in a period where 85% of growers said their farm insurance costs have increased significantly, many growers are having to reduce or cease certain insurances to cope. More than half of all survey respondents said they have no plans to invest in new equipment in the next 12 months, demonstrating the wider market impacts that arise from drought.

Amidst these challenges, the survey highlighted once more the resilience and "get-on-with-it" attitude of the grain producing community. Almost two thirds of the growers surveyed said they felt positive about the future of grain production in South Australia, and while under stress right now, almost 80% of respondents indicated they are still running profitable farming businesses. A great many indicated a degree of surprise at how well their crops had performed in difficult conditions, citing improvements in farming systems, farming practices and grain varieties as positive advancements.

Grain producers indicated support for personal health and wellbeing remains an important

priority, for individuals, and for the wider communities that experience the adverse ripple effects of drought.

Farm succession planning remains an issue of vital importance to the sector, with almost half of all farmers either transitioning out or taking over a farming business.

On particularly topical matters in 2024, the bulk of survey respondents indicated that spray drift is an issue of great importance to them, their farms and their communities. Usage rates of weather station networks remains strong across the state, and there is a strong call from growers to ensure that they have timely, uninterrupted access to quality weather information to help them make the best decisions. Other issues in the spotlight included the negative impact of the 3G phone network switch-off, and the myriad of pest species that growers have had to deal with across 2024.

It is pleasing to note that grain producers are deriving value from the work of their peak body, with a 95% satisfaction rating for GPSA's work representing growers on important issues.

GPSA remains committed to listening to, and acting on behalf of our members, to support them through good times and bad, and ensuring a productive, profitable future for the sector and its members.



Brad Perry

ff.

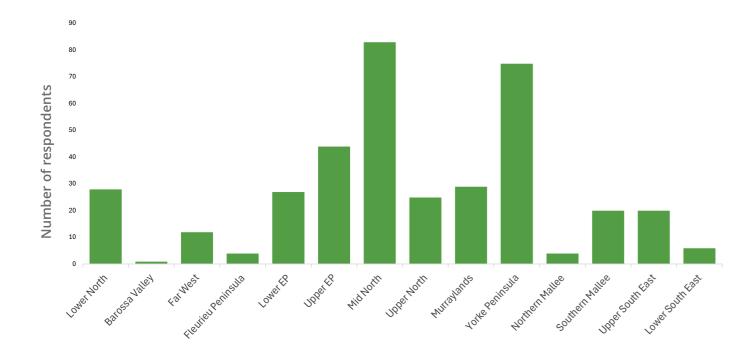
Chief Executive Officer Grain Producers SA



SECTION ONE ABOUT YOU

Where do you farm?

Grain producers from across South Australia participated in the survey, with particularly large numbers from the Mid North (22%), Yorke Peninsula (20%) and the Eyre Peninsula (19%).







Relative to your 2023 harvest, what are you estimating your 2024 harvest results will be like?

95% of growers surveyed indicated their 2024 harvest would be lower than 2023's harvest.

19% said it would be up to 25% lower than 2023.

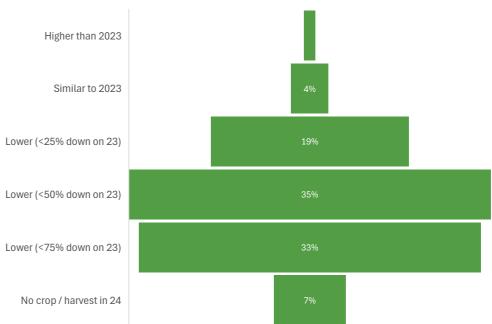
35% said it would be up to 50% lower.

33% said if would be up to 75% lower.

7% of growers indicated they would not harvest a crop this year.



95% indicated 2024's harvest would be lower than 2023





What did you plant/sow in 2024 (as a % of your grain operation)?

Wheat continued to be the most common variety on grain farms across South Australia. The increase in lentil production was evident in 2024, despite the drier conditions.

44% of grain planted by South Australian growers in 2024 was Wheat (comparable to 45% in 2023).

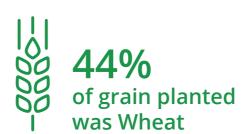
20% of the 2024 grain crop was Barley (vs 23% in 2023).

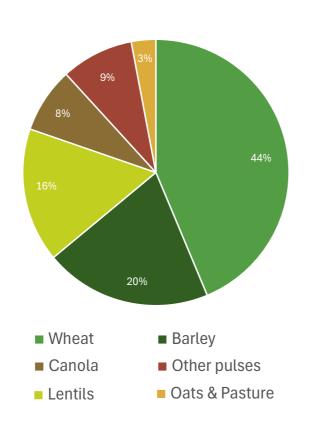
16% of the 2024 crop was Lentils (vs 8% in 2023).

Canola and "Other pulses" were 8% and 9% of the crop respectively.

Other plantings identified by grain growers included:

- Oats for hay
- Vetch
- Clover for pasture





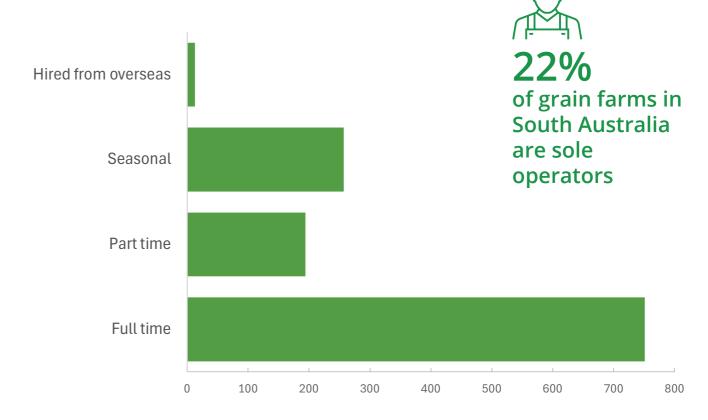
How many staff does your business employ (including you)?

Grain producers surveyed, on average, employ just over two full time staff per farm.

22% of respondents indicated they are the sole full-time employee on their farm, with some 751 full time staff reflected in the survey responses.

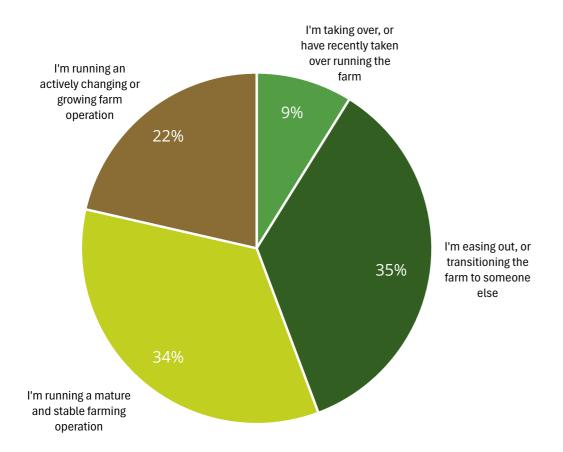
In 2023, 27% indicated they were sole operators, and in 2022, it was 47%.

A further 194 part time staff were employed by survey respondents, as well as 257 seasonal workers. Just 13 respondents indicated that they employed workers from overseas in 2024.





Which of the following best reflects your situation?



Succession and transitioning out of their grain business continues for many farmers in South Australia.

35% of respondents indicated that they are in the process of easing out or transitioning their farm to someone else, while just 9% indicated they are taking over, or have recently taken over, the farm.

This 44% of respondents indicating they are going through succession, is an increase on the 2023 survey number, with 37% of respondents indicating they were going through succession.

34% of respondents indicated they are running a mature and stable farming operation (versus 26% in 2023), while 21% Indicated they are running an actively changing farm (versus 17% in 2023 and 33% in 2022).

WHAT YOU SAID:



"Barely surviving a dysfunctional family business - older generation won't let go."



"Still in the throes of succession with a father that cannot decide when to retire."



"My son is gradually making more major decisions, and timeline is set up for takeover/transfer."

"Practicing retiring unsuccessfully!"





SECTION TWO YOUR PERSPECTIVES

How are you feeling about the 2024 harvest?



0 very positive



69 positive



115 neutral



105 negative



64 very negative

20% positive about the 2024 harvest

The impact of the drought was obvious in grower feelings about the 2024 harvest.

Of the 353 respondents, 48% indicated they felt negative (30%) or very negative (18%) about the 2024 harvest.

This is compared to just 15% of respondents who said they felt negative (13%) or very negative (2%) about the 2023 harvest.

Perhaps surprisingly, 20% of respondents indicated they felt positive about the 2024 harvest (versus 50% in 2023 and 91% in 2022).

Many respondents indicated that, despite very challenging weather conditions (drought and frost), they had been surprised by the quality and yields of their grain crops.



"Considering the amount of rain, it was amazing we reaped anything. 40 years ago, we would not have the Header out of the shed."



WHAT YOU SAID:

"Surprising yields for a very poor season. We at least got our seed back."



"Our legumes are a disaster! We may not even get enough seed for next year and the prices are too low to cover the cost of production."



"Potentially the driest year on record, made a financial loss but still delivered good grain and livestock with minimal erosion."



"Lucky to get seed back.
Worst season since 1982."



"My 49th year farming, and my worst."



"Worst season we've ever had. Couldn't reap barley so had to buy in sheep feed. Income from wheat will cover one third of the cost of sowing and reaping."



15

"For the rain we received, it hasn't been a complete disaster in our area."



"Very lucky to harvest what we did on the rainfall we had."



"Lowest rainfall on record, had to buy hay and grain for sheep and grain seed for next year. Never had to do this before."





How are you feeling about the longer term future of the South Australian Grain Industry?







197 positive



104 neutral



27 negative



very negative

17

63% positive about the future

More than 60% of grain producers surveyed indicated that they felt either positive (56%) or very positive (7%) about the longer term future of South Australia's grain industry.

This compares to 76% of positive sentiments from the 2023 survey and 82% in 2022.

Just 9% of growers felt either negative (8%) or very negative (1%) about the longer term future of the sector (versus 3% in 2023).

"Sustainable but not profitable. We will make a loss but the underlying fundamentals are sound."

"Up until 2024 we were profitable and sustainable, however costs are eroding profitability."

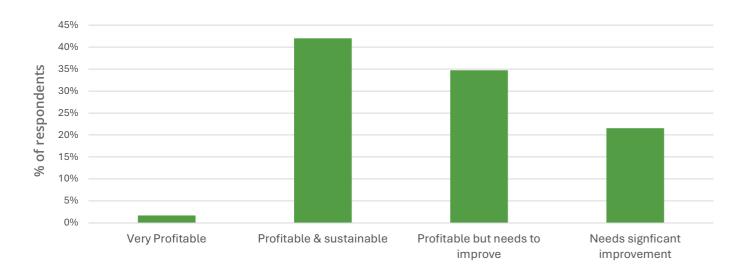
How would you describe the health of your farming business in 2024?

Despite the drought, 44% of respondents indicated that their farming business was either very profitable (2%) or profitable and sustainable (42%). This figure compares to 59% in 2023 and 98% in 2022.

57% of respondents indicated that their farm needed improvement – 35% said their farm was profitable but needed to improve, while 22% indicated their farm needed significant improvement. The latter figure reflects the biggest change from last year's survey, where just 6% of respondents indicated their farming business needed significant improvement.



profitable grain businesses



WHAT YOU SAID:

"The rising cost of machinery, land leasing and inputs is making smaller scale farming more challenging."

"Might need a scary amount of finance to carry on... tough times ahead."

"Being a multienterprise farming business allows us to

spread risk."

"We have a healthy business that is highly vulnerable to weather conditions and input costs!"

"Profitable, but we are experiencing passion fatique. Love agriculture. but sick of the bullshit that goes with it."

"Driest year we have had in 120 years but still managed to grow a profitable crop despite bad frost."

"Long term benchmarking has put us in good stead to know our farming business is heading in a very positive direction."



Were you adversely affected by frost in 2024?

The 2024 frost event was anecdotally one of the worst on record in South Australia for grain producers. Nearly 60% of growers indicated their crops were impacted by frost in some way.



57% of growers surveyed indicated they had been adversely affected by frost

WHAT YOU SAID:



"Fourth year in a row with frost. Not as bad this year as the past few years."



"Legumes impacted more than cereal - large patches in the paddock died."



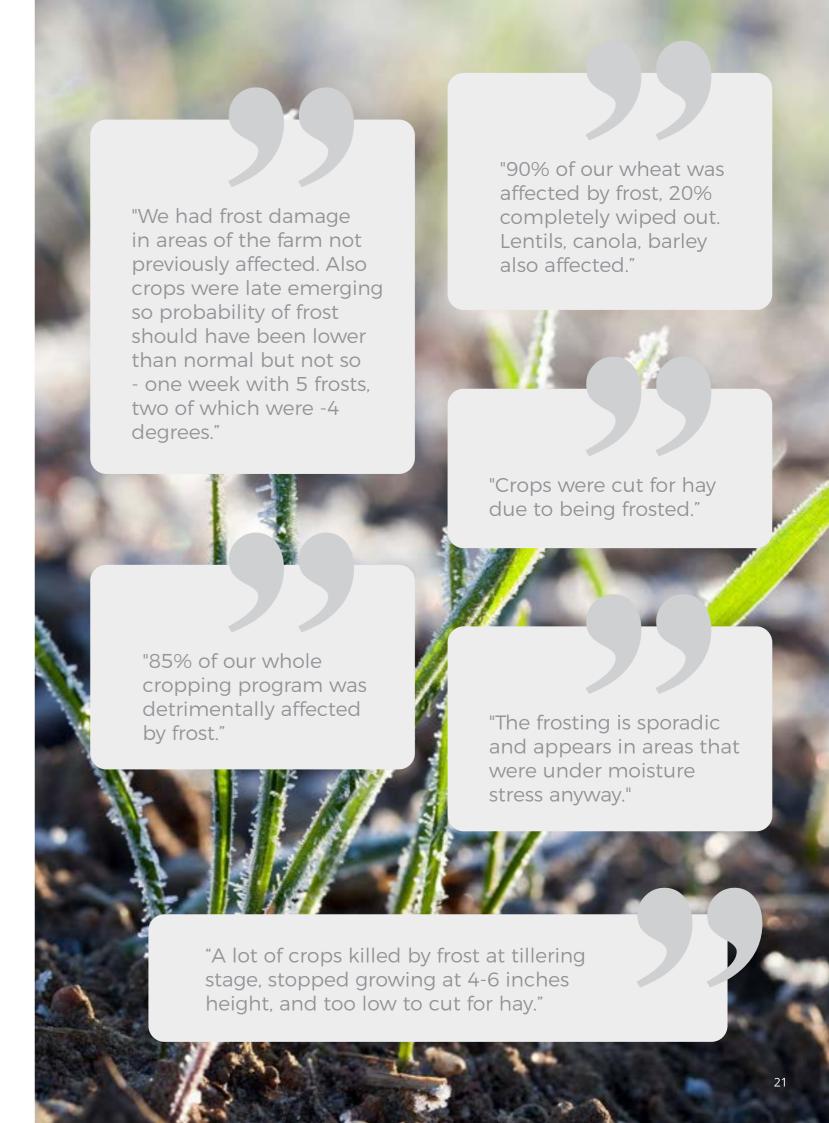
"One frost event cost us up to 50% of our yield."



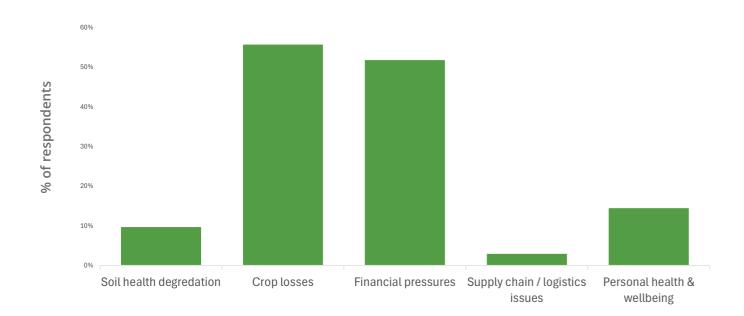
"Frost killed what little sheep feed we had."



"About 50% of our farm had some frost damage."



What has been the most significant challenge your farming business has faced during the current drought?



56% indicated crop losses due to drought in 2024

The most significant challenge that South Australian grain producers have faced during the drought is crop losses (56% of respondents indicated this was their most significant farming business challenge), followed by financial pressures (52%).

15% of respondents indicated that their personal health and wellbeing has been the most significant challenge they are still navigating during the drought.

In GPSA's 2023 survey, 78% of grain producers indicated they were either very or somewhat prepared for drought.

WHAT YOU SAID:



"Sheep feed challenge - a lack of pasture growth, and harvest stubbles are poor."



"Perceived future financial stress with low yield expectations."

"Feeding stock and management is challenging in a tough season."

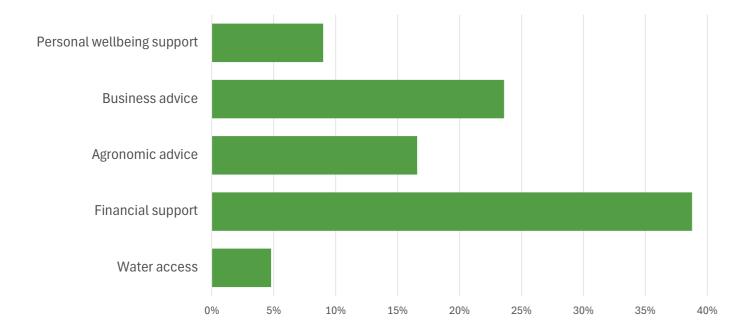
"This drought has come after the region was hit by flood and fairly moderate production years, but it is the 'community perception & engagement' process that I have found the most challenging."

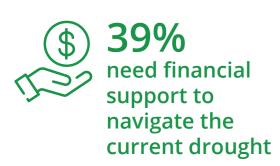


What do you most need assistance with to help you navigate the current drought?

Not surprisingly, 39% of respondents indicated that they most need financial support to help them navigate the current drought.

24% said they need help with business advice, while 17% said they require greater agronomic advice.







"We need low interest loans to finance inputs for next cropping year."

WHAT YOU SAID:

"We need government support in the form of backing our industry to recover, and not introducing regulations that affect the viability of our current industry ie. paraquat/diquat proposed restrictions."



"Some rain in 2025 would help."



"Business advice specific to identifying opportunities to diversify the business and generate off-farm income."



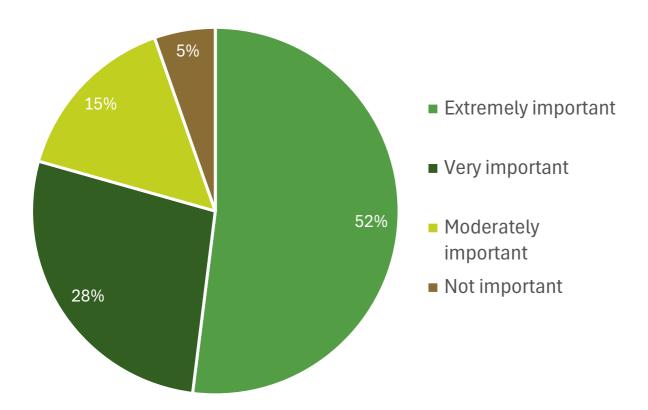
"More government relief on their charges is needed like stamp duty, water levy rates and council rates."



"Financial help needed with feed costs." Despite nationally agreed protocols that no longer require drought declarations, how important is it to you that the South Australian Government formally acknowledge the current drought and its impact on the grain industry?

As a regular point of discussion, we asked South Australian grain producers about the importance of drought acknowledgment.

95% of respondents indicated that it is important that the South Australian Government formally acknowledge the current drought and its impact on the grain industry, with 80% indicating it is either extremely or very important.

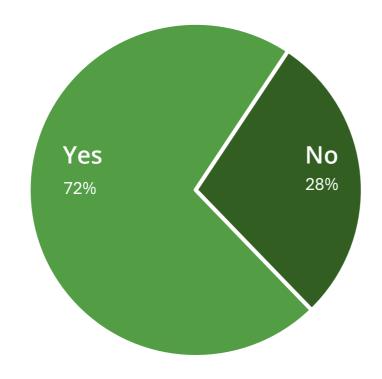






Do you feel that research, development and extension (RD&E) projects, funded by GRDC, are adequately addressing the challenges you face as a grain grower?

72% of the 353 South
Australian grain producer
respondents felt that the
Research, Development and
Extension (RD&E) projects
being funded by the Grains
Research and Development
Corporation (GRDC) are
adequately addressing the
challenges they face as grain
growers.



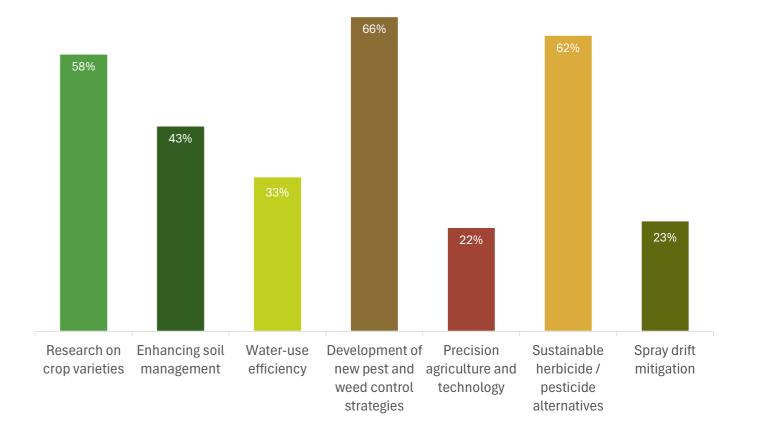
What areas would you like to see GRDC prioritise for RD&E funding, to benefit your farming operation?

Nearly 70% of respondents indicated they would like to see the Grains Research and Development Corporation prioritising funding for the development of new pest and weed control strategies.

62% said they would like research prioritised in developing sustainable pesticide and herbicide alternatives, while 58% of growers said they would like research funds prioritised for new crop varieties.

Additional research funding priorities for GRDC included:

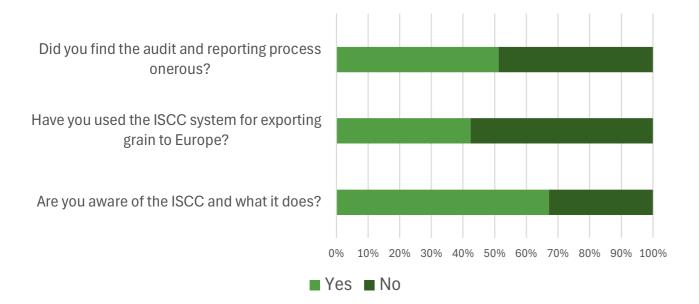
- Frost tolerance / mitigation
- Snails
- Soil amelioration
- Soil salinity
- Climate change practices





Regarding the ISCC (International Sustainability & Carbon Certification):

- 67% of respondents are aware of the ISCC and what it does.
- 42% of growers have used the ISCC system for exporting grain to Europe.
- Of those that have used the ISCC system, approximately half (51%) said they found the audit and reporting process onerous.





SECTION THREE
YOUR PRIORITIES...

In 2024, what would you say were the top challenges you faced operating a grain growing business?

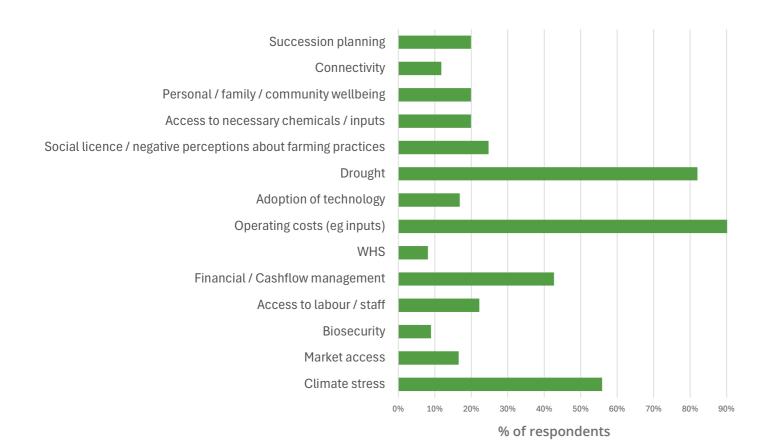


90% identified operating costs as one of their biggest challenges

Consistent with 2022 and 2023's responses, 90% of respondents indicated that operating costs was their top challenge faced in running their grain growing business.

Unsurprisingly, the biggest rise from 2023 was drought as the biggest challenge (82%), followed by climate stress (56%), cashflow (43%) and social licence (25%).

Of the challenges asked about, biosecurity (9%), work, health and safety (8%) and connectivity (12%) were the lowest ranked, mirroring 2023's results.



Personal / family / community wellbeing Cashflow management CLIMATE STRESS OPERATING COSTS Access to inputs Access to inputs Drought Adoption of technology Succession planning Social licence

WHAT YOU SAID:



"Hard-to-kill summer weeds and high machinery costs."



"Banks are understaffed and South Australia will have a lot of farmers looking for seasonal finance." "Weather forecasting should be better by now. False hope is worse than it being announced accurately."

"Phone service is low/ not working after 3G turn off."



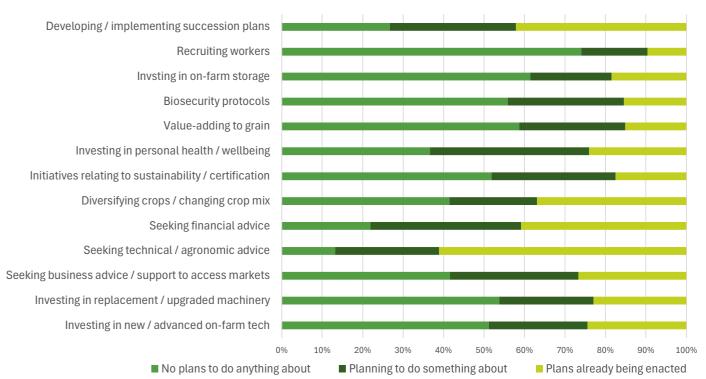


"Its going to be tough for farmers who need to top up their finances."

"Profit margins are reducing but land prices are increasing."



What are your plans over the next 12 months regarding the following?



Areas where grain producers are already undertaking initiatives include:

- 61% of growers surveyed said they are already seeking out technical / agronomic advice, with another 26% of growers planning to do something about technical / agronomic advice in the year ahead. This is slightly down on 2023's data, where 69% of respondents indicated they already seek agronomist advice, and 74% in 2022.
- 41% of growers are currently seeking financial advice, while another 27% are planning to do so in 2025.
- 37% are in the process of diversifying or changing their cropping mix, with another 22% planning to do so in the next 12 months.
- 74% of growers indicated they have no plans to recruit workers over the next 12 months.

Of the areas where no plans are being made by growers in the next 12 months, the top answers were:

- 61% indicated they have no plans to invest in on-farm storage in the year ahead
- 52% will not be investing in new technology
- 55% are not investing in replacing or upgrading machinery
- 59% are not value adding to grain

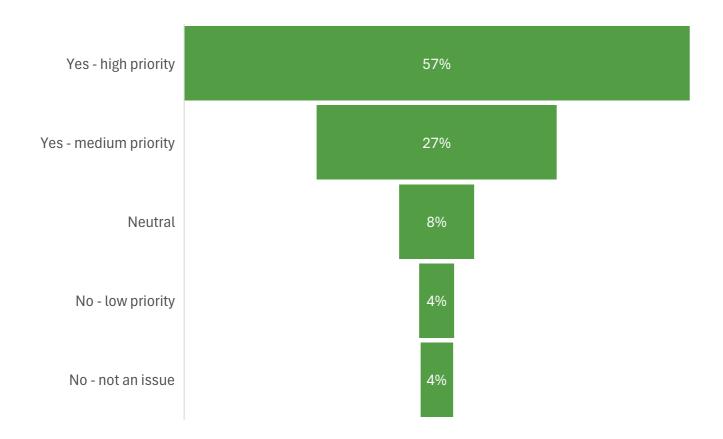
Is spray drift something you consider / have plans in place to actively manage?

A majority (84%) of respondents indicated that spray drift is of high or medium importance to them, and that they consider or have plans in place to actively manage drift when spraying. This is identical to the 2023 result.



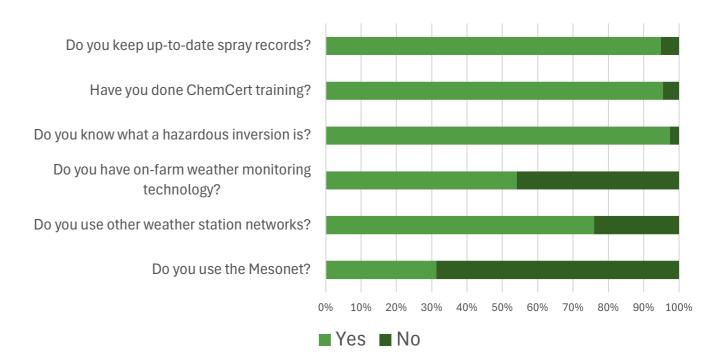
84% indicate spray drift is an important consideration

57% say managing spray drift is a high priority





Regarding spraying and weather:



Regarding specific activities and approaches undertaken in relation to spraying and weather, the responses were:

- 31% of growers surveyed indicate they use the Mesonet
- 76% of growers said they use weather station networks
- 54% of growers have on-farm weather monitoring technology
- 97% of growers said they know what a hazardous inversion is
- 95% of growers have done ChemCert training
- 95% of growers say they keep up-to-date spraying records



54% have on-farm weather monitoring technology

37

Regarding practical solutions for spray drift related issues, responses included:

99

"Mesonet needs to cover all grain growing areas, and needs to be free." "A lot of big selfpropelled sprayers are just going too fast to control drift/droplet size."

99

"Operators spraying outside ideal conditions has to be addressed."

"Be aware of your conditions and be considerate to neighbours."

99

"We need to have access to 24hr hazardous inversion predictions, not just 2hr, so we can plan our spray days."

"Awareness of local and upcoming conditions.
Understanding limitations of my current boom."

"Do not spray in inversions; use correct nozzles and pressure; don't travel too fast; lower boom height."



"Planning my spraying program to minimise potential off-target drift in addition to using correct technology and application procedures."



"People need to be held accountable when spraying in adverse conditions, maybe a hotline to report people spraying."



"Chemical users need to be active in following protocols, and have strong training."

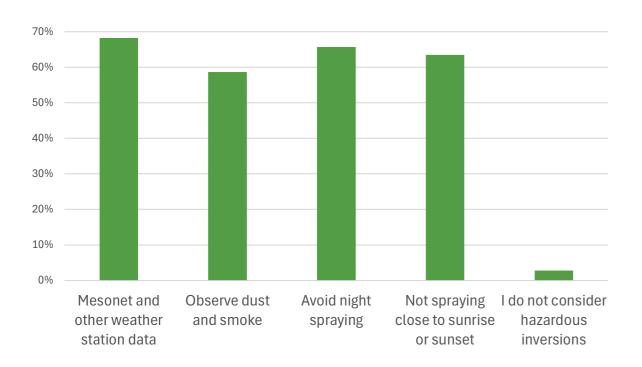


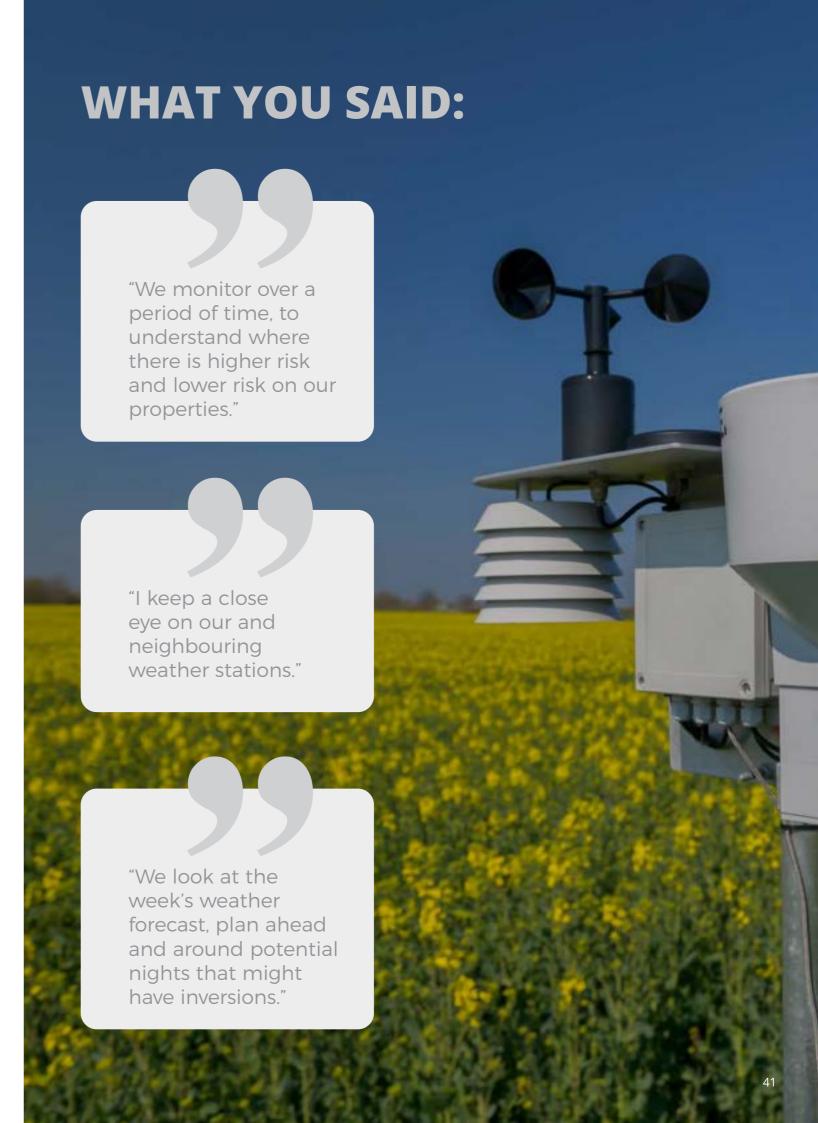
"Make Mesonet free (extra subscription to see hazardous inversions Is prohibitive)."

How do you mitigate against hazardous inversions?

Nearly 70% of grower respondents indicated they use the Mesonet or other weather station data to help them mitigate against hazardous inversions.

66% avoid night spraying altogether, while 63% avoid spraying too close to sunrise or sunset.



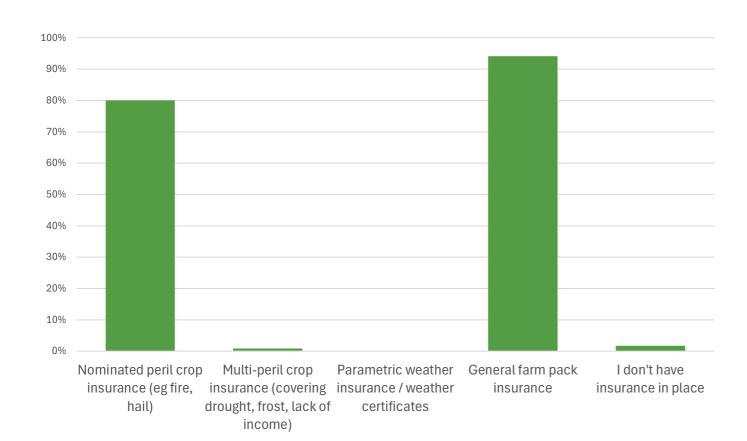




Do you have any of the following insurances in place?

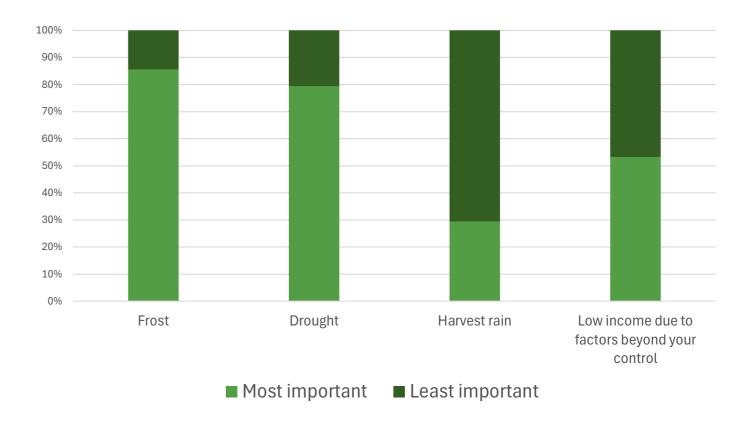
One of the topical issues when it comes to farm costs is insurance. 94% of grain producers who responded to the survey said they had general farm pack insurance in place in 2024, while 80% of respondents said they had nominated peril crop insurance (eg fire, hail).

Only 2% of respondents said they had no insurances in place, while just 1% of respondents said they had taken out multi-peril crop insurance.



If affordable insurance options were available to protect against the following risks, which would you prioritise?

The most desirable affordable insurance category identified by respondents was frost (42% indicated their most important category), followed by drought (31%) and low income due to factors beyond their control (28%).

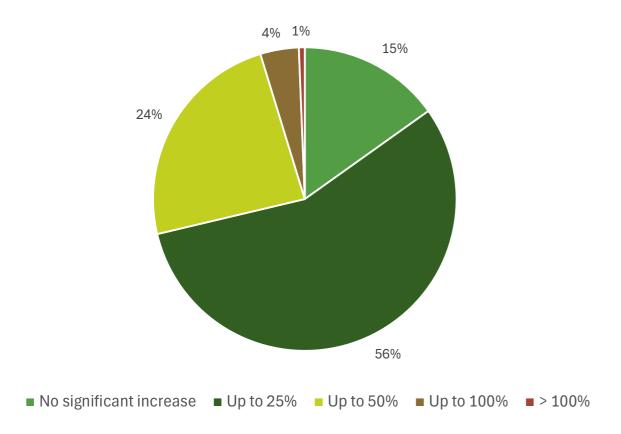


How much has the cost of your crop insurance premiums increased over the past 12 months?

Insurance premiums have contributed to rising costs, with 56% of growers stating that their crop insurance premiums had risen by up to 25% over the past 12 months.

24% indicated their insurance premiums had risen by up to 50%, and 4% indicated they had risen by up to 100%.

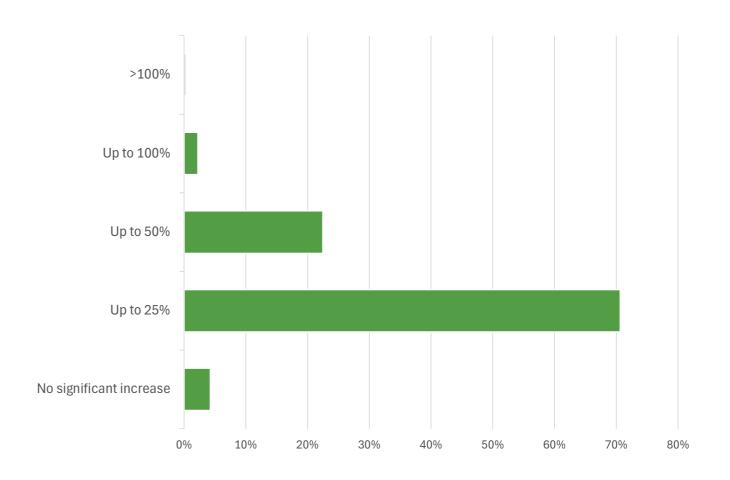
Just 15% of respondents said there had been no significant rise in their crop insurance premiums in 2024.



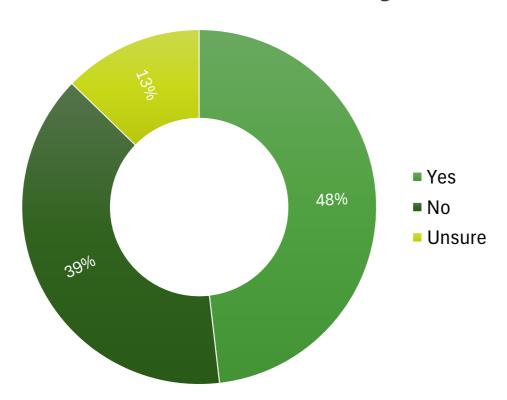
How much has the cost of your general farm insurance premiums increased over the past 12 months?

71% of growers said their general farm insurance premiums had risen by up to 25% over the past 12 months, while 23% said they had rising by up to 15%.

Just 4% of growers said they had seen no significant rise in their general farm insurance premiums in 2024.



Has the 3G switchoff impacted your level of connectivity?





Almost half of all survey respondents (48%) said that the 3G switchoff had impacted their level of connectivity, while another 13% were unsure.

48% have been impacted by the 3G switchoff



"4G is that bad in areas we go back to UHF radio."



"Minimal coverage on some properties leading to concern over safety, considering alternatives like Starlink."

WHAT YOU SAID:



"Even though it was 3G switched off, the 4G signal which was just sufficient for coverage before, has now got big dead spots across much of our farm, leaving no coverage."



"Can't even get phone calls now. 95% of this farm is unable to access service."

"We had acceptable

service."

we have VERY Limited

service a month ago, now



"We had a crop fire at my brother-in-law's property, and we were unable to communicate via mobile due to no service as a result of the 3G shut down."



"Had to spend \$2,500 upgrading the GPS in our tractor."

Which pests have you had to deal with on your farm this year?



The diverse range of pest challenges facing South Australian grain producers isn't subsiding.

The most common pest dealt with by South Australian grain producers in 2024, according to survey responses, was snails (67%).

30% of growers saw impacts from mice, and 26% of producers had challenges with weevils and rabbits.

Other pest species that featured prominently in responses included kangaroos, emus, earwigs, millipedes, wombats, sparrows, moths, foxes, aphids and grubs.



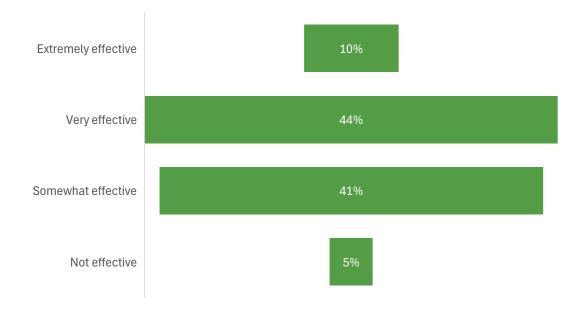
YOUR GPSA...

How effective do you feel GPSA has been in representing you/SA grain producers on important/relevant issues in 2024?



of respondents indicated that GPSA has been effective in some way in representing grain producers on important issues

Nearly all respondents indicated that GPSA has, to some degree, been effective in representing them on important / relevant issues in 2024. This aligns with 2023's result (95%) and 2022 (94%). Those that felt GPSA had been extremely effective increased from 9% in 2023 to 10% in 2024, off the back of a rise from 4% in 2022.



WHAT YOU SAID:



"It's important to have a professional voice for farmers, and Grain Producers SA does that."



"We think you're doing a pretty good job and its good to have you helping us and on our side. This following year is going to be very tough for some, so will need more help."



"I appreciate being made aware of the proposed changes to the use of Paraquat and Diquat and the lobbying GPSA have done."



"Please continue publishing your Grain Producer magazine. The whole family looks forward to reading it. I love the work you guys are doing - please keep it up!"

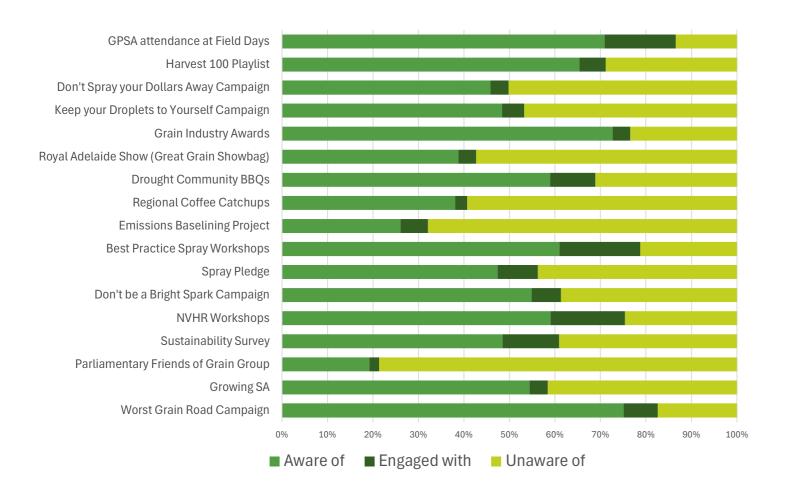


"Keep up the good work advocating for the grains industry, issues like Paraquat/Diquat review are very significant and need advocacy to ensure the continuation of profitable and sustainable agriculture."



"Appreciate GPSA's ongoing support and advocacy on behalf of SA grain growers."

Which of the following GPSA projects did you engage with, or were aware of, in 2024?



The GPSA projects that respondents had the highest levels of awareness of included:

- Worst Grain Road Campaign (75%)
- Grain Industry Awards (73%)
- GPSA attendance at Field Days (71%)
- Harvest 100 Playlist (65%)
- Best Practice Spray Workshops (61%)
- Drought Community BBQs (59%), and
- NVHR Workshops (59%).



71% GPSA newsletter



62% GPSA magazine



55% Stock Journal



45% ABC Country Hour

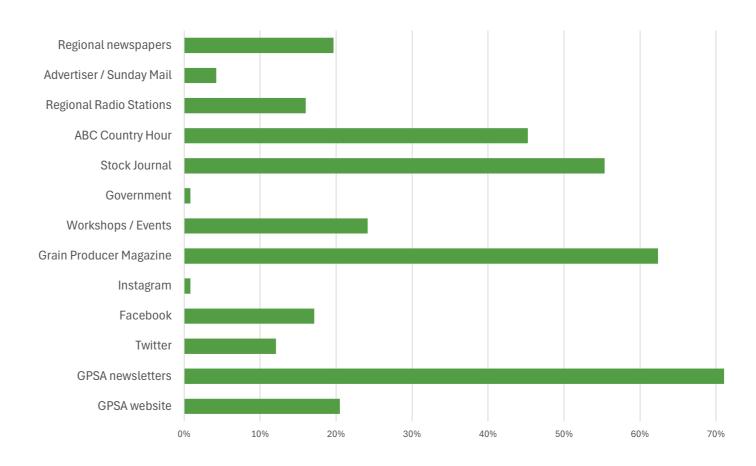
How do you hear about GPSA's work in the grain industry?

GPSA's newsletters are the most commonly cited source of information about GPSA's work in the grain industry (71% of respondents). This is significantly higher than the number reported in 2023 (48%).

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This is followed by:

- Grain Producer Magazine (62% of respondents, vs 56% in 2023)
- Stock Journal (55%, vs 56% in 2023)
- ABC Country Hour (45%)



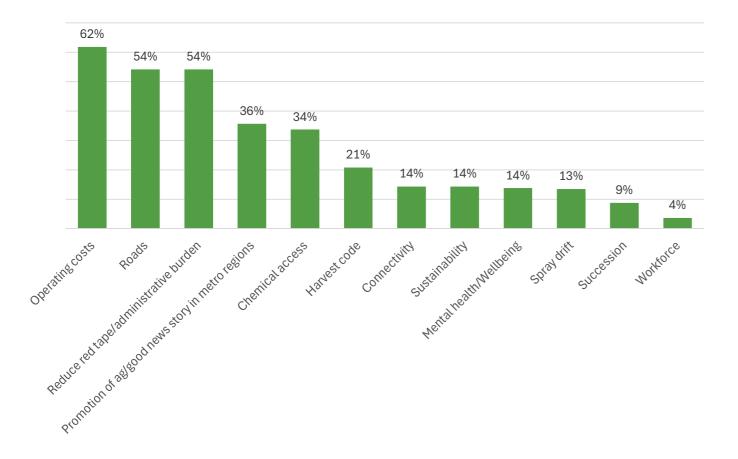
What are the top 3 policy areas you would like to see GPSA focus on for the grain industry over the next 12 months?

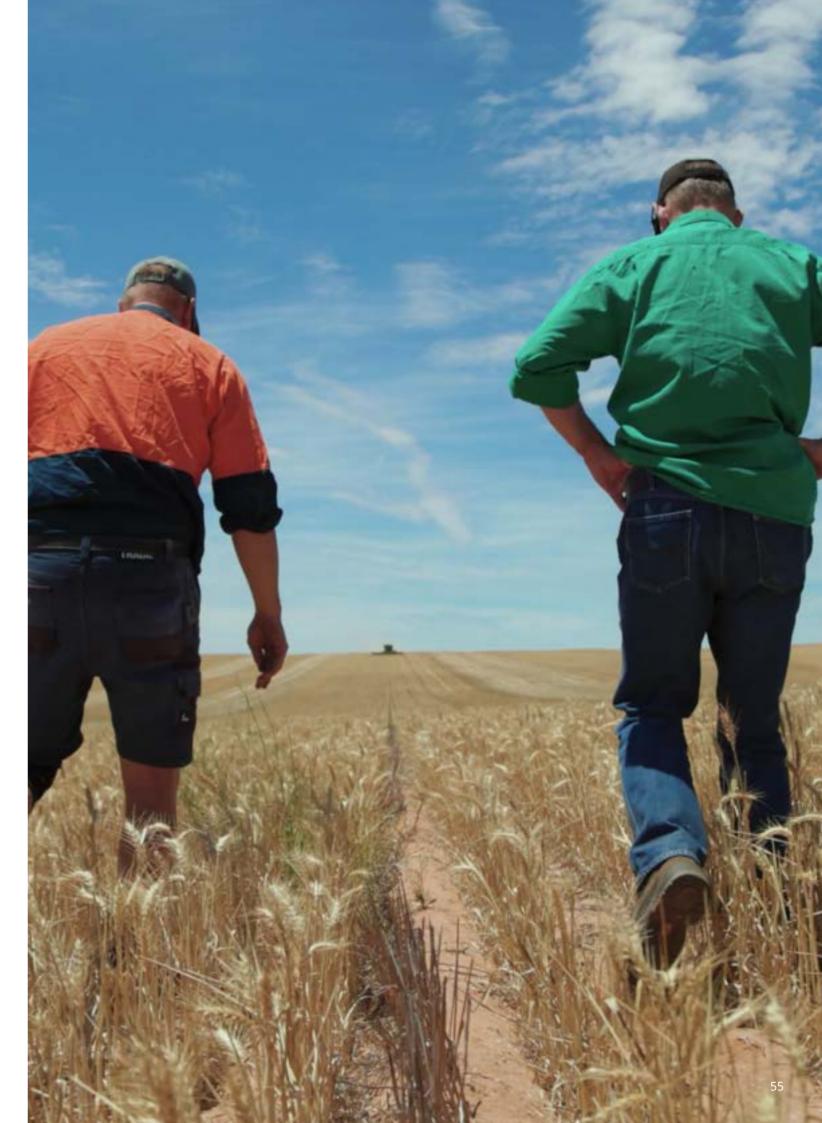
The top 3 policy areas that growers indicated they want GPSA to focus on for the grain industry over the next 12 months were;

- Operating costs (62%) (highest priority in both 2023 and 2024)
- Roads (54%) (second highest priority in both 2023 and 2024)
- Reduced red tape / administrative burden (54%)

Other policy areas to rank highly included:

- Promotion of agriculture / good news stories in metropolitan regions (36%)
- Chemical access (34%)
- Harvest code (21%)





Thank you

Grain Producers SA would like to thank the 353 grain producers that participated in the 2024 survey.

The feedback, insights and priorities identified by grain producers affords GPSA clarity and focus for the work it undertakes on their behalf. This vitally important annual conversation underpins key decision making, policy development, and grower advocacy work to Government, industry and community, all in the service of the state's grain producing community.

The more grower voices we hear and feed into these annual surveys, the more representative and effective GPSA can be for all in the state's grain producing community. If you didn't participate in this year's survey, we encourage you to do so next year, and every year.

No matter the challenges or opportunities our industry navigates, GPSA shares the optimism of the overwhelming majority of growers - that South Australia's grain industry can continue to grow sustainably and be a powerhouse for our state well into the future. In the service of the producers that drive that growth, GPSA's mission of support and advocacy continues.



Acknowledgements...

GPSA would like to acknowledge and thank all South Australian grain producers that participated in the 2024 survey, either online or by post.

Thank you to Strategy Road Pty Ltd and Coalmine Canary for conducting the survey on behalf of GPSA and producing this Insights Report.

Also, congratulations to Tony Moten of Pekina in the Upper North who was randomly drawn as the winner of our survey prize, an Adelaide Oval Hotel package.

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