

ENATE RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
BUDGET ESTIMATES, 25, 26 MAY 2005 - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Market Access Division

Question: MA 01

Topic: Iraq Wheat

Hansard Page: 77

Senator Heffernan asked:

Is there a restriction zone around these ships that are sitting 100 yards offshore?

Answer:

There is no defined restriction zone around the ships sitting offshore. However, any entry to the ships is closely monitored by the shipping Master and as with normal international shipping rules, the shipping Master determines who can and cannot enter the vessel at any point in time.

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Hansard Page: 78-79

Senator Heffernan asked:

What were the previous loads in the ships and where did they go previously? Are they grain specific ships, or ships that back load with other stuff? Did the five ships that were knocked back come from five different loading ports.

Answer:

The previous loads in the five ships were wheat, soya beans, iron ore, iron ore pellets and cement clinker respectively. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has been unable to obtain information on what ports the vessels previously visited.

The ships involved are not grain specific ships.

The loading ports of the five ships that experienced problems were; Brisbane, Esperance, Thevenard/Port Lincoln (part loads from two ports), Wallaroo/Port Lincoln (part loads from two ports) and Albany.

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Question: MA 03

Topic: MoUs

Hansard Page: 98

Senator O'Brien asked:

Are English language copies of these agreements able to be supplied to the Committee?

Answer:

As the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) documents are bilateral agreements the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has commenced making representations to the Governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan and Eritrea seeking confirmation that they are willing to provide the signed MoU documents to the Committee.

Consultations with the Government of Saudi Arabia indicate some sensitivities to the public release of the MoU on trade in Live Animals signed with Saudi Arabia on 4 May 2005. On the basis of Australia's broader national interest and bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia we are unable to provide a copy of the signed MoU. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is willing to brief the Committee *in camera* on the content of the MoU if desired.

Kuwaiti government officials have advised that they have no concerns with providing a signed copy of the MoU document to the Committee. Copies are attached for the Committee.

We are still waiting for a response by Jordanian and Eritrean Governments to our request to provide copies of the relevant MoUs to the Committee. Once further advice or agreement has been received from these Governments, the Department will respond to the Senator's question as appropriate.

A copy of the United Arab Emirates MoU was provided to the Committee in February 2005.