

Tara Moriarty

Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Regional New South Wales
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**Media Release****NSW Government looks to expand rice export industry****Monday 8 April 2024**

The NSW Government will introduce a Bill to Parliament in May, to develop a new rice export marketing and trade arrangement for the Northern Rivers rice growing region. This is an important step in the NSW Government's commitment to bring new opportunities to the state's agriculture sector, and to ensure regulations do not hinder industry growth.

At the same time the NSW Government has committed to rice growers in Southern NSW and will keep existing rice vesting arrangements in place for that region with a review by 30 June 2029. This will ensure export marketing continuity for Australia's largest rice exporting region.

These new arrangements will provide new opportunities for NSW agricultural exports – supporting a new emerging rice sector in the Northern Rivers that can contribute to expanding the state's opportunities in overseas markets.

In practice, these changes will mean the Northern Rivers growers will for the first time be able to organise their own arrangement for exporting rice and not have to go through the vesting arrangements that binds growers in southern NSW. This aims to cut red tape and costs so the emerging Northern Rivers region can be assisted in developing.

The NSW Government's actions recognise that there are two distinct rice growing regions in NSW and supports the implementation of changes which are considered responsible, appropriate and supportive to the continued development of both rice growing and exporting.

The NSW rice industry had an estimated farm gate value of \$219 million in 2022-23. Presently around 98 per cent of NSW rice production occurs within the three southern irrigation regions of the Murrumbidgee, Coleambally and Murray.

The Bill will include a transitional start date of 1 September 2024 for the Northern Rivers arrangement, which will then occur after the 2024 Northern Rivers rice harvest.

These initiatives have been developed by the NSW Government after it was handed a report by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), that was initiated by the former Liberal Nationals Government, recommending that the statutory marketing board for rice exports and its sole and exclusive export licence arrangement be removed.

The NSW Government has decided not to accept that ABARES recommendation because it wants to support and assist the rice sector to grow sustainably.

The Government will in its Bill also move to enhance the governance and transparency of the rice marketing arrangements to benefit the sector and growers.

The 2023 ABARES Independent Report into NSW Rice Vesting Arrangements and the NSW Government Response is available on the NSW DPI website. <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about->

[us/legislation/list/rice-marketing/review/info-paper/the-nsw-government-response-to-the-abares-independent-report-into-rice-vesting](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/legislation/list/rice-marketing/review/info-paper/the-nsw-government-response-to-the-abares-independent-report-into-rice-vesting)

Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional NSW, and Minister for Western NSW, Tara Moriarty said:

“The NSW Government is committed to creating new business opportunities for the state’s agricultural sector and we are taking action to do that for the rice industry by listening to their needs, cutting red tape and assisting growers expand their export potential.

“We are both recognising the needs and value of the established growers in the south and opening up opportunities for the emerging sector in the Northern Rivers.

“I want to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by stakeholder organisations and rice growers over the last year, who outlined what they thought was working, what wasn’t and how the Government could renew their export potential.

NSW RICE INDUSTRY

- The NSW rice industry had an estimated farm gate value of \$219 million in 2022-23 (DPI estimate) with an average farm gate value of \$186 million over the past ten years.
- The NSW rice industry is located across two separate regions of the State:
 - Southern rice region: Roughly 97% to 99% of NSW rice production occurs within the three irrigation regions of the Murrumbidgee, Coleambally and Murray.
 - Northern rice region: A smaller quantity of rice is grown mainly within the Richmond Valley near Casino and Lismore and the Tweed Valley further North.
- Australian (effectively NSW – as NSW makes up about 99% of national production) rice exports averaged \$263 million over the past 10 financial years, ranging from \$34 million in 2020-21 to \$402 million in 2014-15. Rice exports are highly variable and predominantly influenced by water availability and the price of alternative crops, all of which determine supply.
- Key Australian rice export markets include but are not limited to the following:
 - Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon)
 - Japan, South Korea, Taiwan
 - PNG, Solomon Islands, other Pacific nations
 - New Zealand

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