



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**

Horticulture export cost recovery arrangement: financial performance 2024–25



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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

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Introduction

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry performs a range of regulatory activities in support of our producers and exporters, who take their high-quality products to global markets. Australian agriculture, fisheries and forestry is a substantial part of the Australian economy. According to [ABARES Agricultural commodities report: December quarter 2024](#), agricultural production contributed around \$1.7 billion every week (total \$88.4 billion in 2024–25) to our economy in 2024–25.

Cost recovery plays a key role in the way the Australian Government charges non-government sectors for some or all the efficient costs for a specific government activity. It is an important funding source to support Australian producers in accessing markets and protecting the reputation of Australian agricultural goods.

Cost recovery can influence the demand for government activity and raise awareness of how much government activities cost. It improves the efficiency, productivity and responsiveness of government activities and accountability for those activities.

Since 2019, the Australian Government has been supporting industry through the *Busting Congestion for Agricultural Exporters* package (DAWE 2020) and *Securing the future of agricultural trade* measures (DAFF 2023). This demonstrates the continued investment in regulatory export trade and commitment to meeting the needs of exporters and the expectations of our trading partners.

This report describes the financial performance of the horticulture cost recovery arrangement against the department's budget and [Cost recovery implementation statement horticulture exports 2024–25](#).

Summary of financial position

The *Cost recovery implementation statement: horticulture exports 2024–25* projected a deficit of \$0.9 million for the 2024–25 financial year. The department's actual spend was \$14.7 million against revenue of \$13.6 million resulting in a deficit of \$1.1 million (Table 1).

Table 1 Horticulture export arrangement financial position, 2024–25

Category	Actual (\$)	Budget (\$)	Budget variance (\$)	CRIS (\$)	CRIS variance (\$)
Revenue	13,563,101	13,809,939	(246,837)	11,234,258	2,328,843
Expenses	14,710,265	15,146,995	(436,730)	12,108,485	2,601,781
Net surplus/(deficit)	(1,147,164)	(1,337,056)	189,892	(874,227)	(272,937)
Appropriation	1,147,164	–	1,147,164	n/a	n/a
Accumulated result	(8,082,193)	(8,846,719)	764,526	n/a	n/a

Note: Numbers in brackets are negative. Total revenue figures are inclusive of other revenue that is not recovered through regulatory fees and charges.

Securing the future of agricultural trade

The government announced the *Busting Congestion for Agricultural Exporters* package (DAWE 2020) as part of the 2020–21 Budget. The package froze export certification fees and charges in 2020–21 and increased prices in steps to reach full cost recovery in 2023–24. In recent years, the rate of change in Australia's export trade landscape has accelerated. Our market access requirements are changing, and the global agricultural trade environment is becoming more complex. It has become clear that the modelling and assumptions used to form the prices now in legislation differ from reality.

In the *2023–24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook*, the Australian Government committed \$91.8 million over 2 years through the *Securing the future of agricultural trade* measures (DAFF 2023) to sustain delivery of key department export trade and regulatory functions. A further \$3.7 million was provided over 3 years to enable development of an ongoing sustainable funding model. This will assist to the department to remain appropriately resourced through both cost recovery and appropriation funding to carry out its agricultural trade and export functions into the future. The Sustainable Trade Funding Taskforce was established in 2023 to progress the design and implementation of an ongoing sustainable funding model that supports the department's export regulatory and trade activities.

Sustainable funding will provide the availability of a consistent, sufficient funding source that appropriately underpins the delivery of trade and export services and associated enabling activities. This includes strategic prioritisation, and importantly the execution of regulatory export functions and the associated supporting international market access and advocacy activities.

CRIS cost modelling

The key objectives of the department's cost recovery arrangements are to:

- safeguard Australia's animal and plant health status to maintain overseas markets and protect the economy and environment from the impact of exotic pests and diseases, through risk assessment, inspection and certification, and the implementation of emergency response arrangements for Australian agricultural, food and fibre industries
- support more sustainable, productive, internationally competitive and profitable Australian agricultural, food and fibre industries through policies and initiatives that promote better resource management practices, innovation, self-reliance and improved market access.

We use resources such as people, IT, property and equipment to meet these objectives and undertake the corresponding business processes (regulatory activities). These activities enable us to provide outputs that meet the department's policy objectives.

The largest portion of the department's regulatory activity cost is employee related. The time and effort spent on regulatory activities, such as permits, and assessment-based output has been reflected in the fees and charges. This, along with external suppliers and operating support for our export IT systems make up other major direct costs.

The [Australian Government Charging Framework](#) allows government agencies to plan, implement and review their charging activities. Our charging is split between regulatory fees and regulatory levies. Fees are imposed when an activity and its costs can be attributed to a specific individual or organisation. A levy is imposed when a good, service or regulation is provided to a group of individuals or organisations rather than to a specific individual or organisation.

The cost base is modelled to reflect the full costs to deliver regulatory services that support the horticulture industry. The department's [Cost recovery implementation statement horticulture exports 2024–25](#) describes this in further detail.

The [Expenses](#) chapter describes the costs involved in providing our services, by division. For descriptions of the services provided by these divisions, see [Appendix A](#).

Volume and revenue

Revenue for the horticulture exports arrangement was \$13.5 million in 2024–25, \$0.3 million below budget and \$2.3 million higher than forecast in the CRIS. Table 2 and Table 3 detail the volumes and equivalent revenue generated for each regulatory charge and fee.

Table 2 Horticulture export volumes, by charge point, 2024–25

Type of charge	Cost recovery charges	Actual volume (units)	Budget (units)	Variance (units)	Variance (%)	CRIS estimated volume (units)
Charges	Establishment registration – grower or exporter	44	36	8	22	71
	Establishment registration – simple	178	208	(30)	(14)	152
	Establishment registration – complex	98	102	(4)	(4)	146
	Authorised officer annual charge	266	269	(3)	(1)	215
	Establishment application (one-off)	21	14	7	50	45
	Phytosanitary certificate	40,762	40,199	563	1	40,668
	Export volume rate – non-protocol rate	431,329	423,937	7,392	2	515,066
	Export volume rate – protocol rate	291,609	298,397	(6,788)	(2)	286,247
	TRQ certificates	652	1,037	(385)	(37)	0
Fees – audit and inspection	Audit	16,016	18,076	(2,060)	(11)	18,257
	Core inspection	577	463	114	25	4,051
	Additional inspection	314	503	(189)	(38)	–
Fees – documentation	Document – electronic	94,674	93,129	1,545	2	111,705
	Document – manual	16,282	16,667	(385)	(2)	2,700
	Replacement certificate	14	23	(9)	(39)	10
	TRQ certificates	652	1,037	(385)	(37)	0
Fees – authorised officer	Authorised officer application fee	55	64	(9)	(14)	45
	Authorised officer approval	166	153	13	8	148

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Type of charge	Cost recovery charges	Actual volume (units)	Budget (units)	Variance (units)	Variance (%)	CRIS estimated volume (units)
	Authorised officer learning and assessment	45	52	(7)	(13)	45
	Additional learning and assessment	2	1	1	100	0
Fees – organics ^a	Organic certifying organisation	1	1	–	–	1

^a Organic certifiers support a small number of exporters in each export arrangement (excluding Live Animal Exports) with revenue and expense reflected in each arrangement.

Table 3 Horticulture export revenue, by charge point, 2024–25

Type of charge	Cost recovery charges	Actual revenue (\$)	Budget revenue (\$)	Variance (\$)	Variance (%)	CRIS estimated revenue (\$)
Charges	Establishment registration – grower or exporter	51,398	42,158	9,240	22	83,780
	Establishment registration – simple	1,042,226	1,215,161	(172,935)	(14)	896,800
	Establishment registration – complex	1,144,959	1,203,726	(58,767)	(5)	1,722,654
	Authorised officer annual charge	261,478	264,427	(2,949)	(1)	211,345
	Establishment application (one-off)	16,521	11,019	5,502	50	35,370
	Phytosanitary certificate	3,057,145	3,014,941	42,204	1	3,050,100
	Export volume rate – non-protocol rate	552,102	542,640	9,462	2	59,284
	Export volume rate – protocol rate	746,518	763,896	(17,378)	(2)	732,792
	TRQ certificates	29,991	47,701	(17,710)	(37)	0
Total charges	–	6,902,338	7,105,669	(203,331)	(3)	6,792,125
Fees – audit and inspection	Audit	752,502	849,330	(96,828)	(11)	858,079
	Core inspection	26,918	21,672	5,246	24	190,397
	Additional inspection	30,772	49,294	(18,522)	(38)	0
Fees – documentation	Document – electronic	2,272,199	2,235,113	37,086	2	2,680,920
	Document – manual	3,206,078	3,282,011	(75,933)	(2)	531,900
	Replacement certificate	8,036	13,202	(5,166)	(39)	5,740
	Outside ordinary hours	116,135	32,835	83,300	>100	0
	TRQ certificates	26,732	42,517	(15,785)	(37)	0
Fees – authorised officer	Authorised officer application fee	18,040	20,992	(2,952)	(14)	14,760
	Authorised officer approval	54,427	50,163	4,264	9	48,544
	Authorised officer learning and assessment	103,185	119,236	(16,051)	(13)	103,185
	Additional learning and assessment	5,242	2,621	2,621	100	0
Fees – organics a	Organic certifying organisation	8,608	8,608	–	–	8,608
Total fees	–	6,628,874	6,727,594	(98,720)	(1)	4,442,133
Total fees and charges	–	13,531,212	13,833,263	(302,051)	(2)	11,234,258

Note: Based on revised budget set MYEFO 2024. a Organic certifiers support a small number of exporters in each export arrangement (excluding live animal exports) with revenue and expense reflected in each arrangement.

Expenses

Expenditure in 2024–25 was \$14.7 million, \$0.4 million lower than budgeted (Table 4).

The primary driver of the direct budget underspend was due to a reduction in both domestic and international travel. The combined impact of lower-than-budgeted expenditure in other areas, such as compliance and enforcement and other corporate expenses further contributed to the overall budget underspend in both direct and indirect expenditure.

The savings offset overspend in both our direct and indirect digital functions. Cost pressures in the digital space are being driven by ongoing inflationary pressures for digital products, which is particularly being observed in the contractor space.

Table 4 Horticulture export arrangement cost base, by division, 2024–25

Expenses	Division	Actual cost (\$)	Budget cost (\$)	Variance (\$)	Variance (%)
Direct	Export & Veterinary Services Division	585,146	596,764	(11,618)	(2)
	Plant & LAE Welfare & Regulation	5,397,005	5,577,974	(180,969)	(3)
	Digital Business	283,556	264,780	18,776	7
	Compliance & Enforcement	2,462,406	2,521,660	(59,255)	(2)
	Trade and International	126,961	136,858	(9,897)	(7)
	Biosecurity Operations	47,655	94,531	(46,875)	(50)
	Biosecurity Plant and Science Services	1,025,498	1,039,174	(13,676)	(1)
	Plant Protection & Environmental Biosecurity	133,276	139,690	(6,414)	(5)
	Biosecurity Strategy and Reform	56	–	56	0
Total direct expenses	–	10,061,559	10,371,430	(309,871)	(3)
Indirect	Digital Services	2,008,998	2,004,207	4,791	0
	People, Property & Security	1,543,016	1,564,022	(21,006)	(1)
	Finance and Investment	753,023	827,086	(74,063)	(9)
	Legal	205,341	216,874	(11,533)	(5)
	Strategy Performance and Engagement	115,498	131,950	(16,451)	(12)
	Central Funds	15,343	24,010	(8,667)	(36)
	Transformation Taskforce	7,487	7,417	70	1
Total indirect expenses	–	4,648,707	4,775,566	(126,859)	(3)
Total expense	–	14,710,265	15,146,995	(436,730)	(3)

Note: Totals are rounded.

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The gradual increase in staff throughout 2023–24 and into 2024–25 has brought staffing levels and service delivery back up to a similar level prior to austerity measures that were put in place 2022–23. This is enabling the department to return to an optimal and efficient workforce and has resulted in a 15.6% rise in staffing associated with the horticulture arrangement, with an increase in expenses compared to 2023–24 (Table 5).

Table 5 Horticulture export arrangement financial performance, 2021–22 to 2024–25

Finance element	2021–22 (\$)	2022–23 (\$)	2023–24 (\$)	2024–25 (\$)
Revenue = X	9,494,735	11,274,927	12,794,297	13,563,101
Expenses = Y	10,916,857	11,456,216	12,029,771	14,710,265
Balance = X – Y	(1,422,122)	(181,288)	764,526	(1,147,164)
Remissions, rebates and adjustments = Z	1,422,122	100,664	–	1,147,164
Net balance = balance + Z	0	(80,624)	764,526	0
Accumulated result	(8,766,095)	(8,846,719)	(8,082,193)	(8,082,193)

Non-financial performance

The [Annual report 2024–25](#) provides comprehensive information on performance measures and performance results. Non-financial performance measures are given as high-level objectives and are not reported at a level specific to each cost recovery arrangement.

Objective 1 Sector growth

Support Australia’s agricultural sector, including the food and fibre industries, to be increasingly prosperous and internationally competitive in an ever-changing world.

Key activity 1.1

Support sector productivity growth and innovation.

Measure SG-01

Measure SG-01	Greater growth in average agricultural productivity (adjusted for climate and weather effects) for the past 10 years, compared with average annual market sector productivity growth over the same period.
Measure type	Quantitative effectiveness
Target	Greater than or equal to 0% difference over the past 10 years.
Sources	<i>Corporate Plan 2024–25</i> <i>Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25</i> Programs: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.12
2024–25 outcome	Achieved
Result	Agricultural productivity growth was 0.61 percentage points higher than the market sector growth rate.
Tolerances	Achieved: Average annual growth in agricultural productivity (climate-adjusted) exceeds average annual market sector productivity growth over the same period. Partially achieved: Not applicable. Not achieved: Average annual growth in agricultural productivity (climate adjusted) is lower than average annual market sector productivity growth over the same period.

Measure SG-02

Measure SG-02	Equal or reduced cost of levies administration compared with levies disbursed.
Measure type	Quantitative efficiency and regulatory.
Target	Levies administration cost is less than or equal to 1.2% of levies disbursed.
Sources	<i>Corporate Plan 2024–25</i> <i>Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25</i> Programs: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.12
2024–25 outcome	Achieved
Result	Cost was \$6.94 million or 1.10% of levies disbursed
Tolerances	Achieved: Levies administration cost is less than or equal to 1.2% of levies disbursed. Partially achieved: Not applicable. Not achieved: Levies administration cost is more than 1.2% of levies disbursed.

Key activity 1.2

Regulate exports and enable, improve and protect access to international markets.

Measure SG-04

Measure SG-04	Grow access to a diverse range of international markets for Australian exporters of agricultural, fisheries and forestry (AFF) products.
Measure type	Quantitative output
Target	Each year, the department can qualitatively describe the impact of technical market access achievements and how these achievements grow access for Australian AFF producers. Achievements may include opening, improving, maintaining or restoring access. Examples need to be provided to demonstrate that different markets and commodities have had their technical access progressed.
Sources	<i>Corporate Plan 2024–25</i> <i>Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25</i> Programs: 1.13
2024–25 outcome	Achieved
Result	Examples of new, improved, maintained and restored market access have been achieved, with a clear beneficial impact for Australian producers. Examples cover a range of different markets and commodities.
Tolerances	Achieved: If the department provides examples of opening, improving, maintaining and restoring technical market access for different markets, and different commodities. Examples of market access changes have been implemented and are available to AFF exporters. Partially achieved: If the department provides examples of opening, improving, maintaining or restoring access but not all four. Alternatively, if the examples do not demonstrate that clear benefits have been achieved for different markets and commodities (i.e. examples are all focused on a single market or commodity, or the achievements are not of value to Australian exporters). Examples of market access changes have been implemented and are available to AFF exporters. Not achieved: If the department cannot provide any examples of opening, improving, maintaining or restoring access to any markets or commodities.

Measure SG-06

Measure SG-06	Effective delivery of regulatory responsibilities for relevant export applications under the <i>Export Control Act 2020</i> .
Measure type	Quantitative, effectiveness and regulatory.
Target	Establish a baseline.
Sources	<i>Corporate Plan 2024–25</i> <i>Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25</i> Programs: 1.13
2024–25 outcome	Achieved
Result	99.83% of all relevant export applications were completed within the requisite consideration period. This sets the baseline.
Tolerances	Achieved: Over 95% of all relevant export applications are completed within the requisite consideration period specified by the <i>Export Control Act 2020</i> . Partially achieved: Over 85% of all relevant export applications are completed within the requisite consideration period specified by the <i>Export Control Act 2020</i> . Not achieved: Under 85% of all relevant export applications are completed within the requisite consideration period specified by the <i>Export Control Act 2020</i> .

Measure SG-07

Measure SG-07	Increase in the number of electronic certificates issued for export.
Measure type	Quantitative efficiency and regulatory.
Target	Plus 2% of what the final 2023–24 eCert number is.
Sources	<i>Corporate Plan 2024–25</i> <i>Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25</i> Programs: 1.13
2024–25 outcome	Achieved
Result	84,180 electronic certificates issued for paperless trading across multiple commodities and importing countries. (12.5% increase from 2023–24 when 74,661 were issued).
Tolerances	Achieved: 2% or more increase. Partially achieved: 1% – 1.99% increase. Not achieved: Less than 1% increase.

Appendix A: Divisional activities

Table A1 Department activities, by division

Group	Division	Description of activities
Agricultural Trade and Regulation Group	Trade and International	Engages in bilateral, regional and multilateral opportunities to advance Australia's agriculture trade and international diplomatic interests. Pursue agricultural trade and market access through multilateral negotiations, high-level bilateral meetings and counsellor network engagement and negotiations with trading partners. Invest in the department's culture and capability to deliver policies and initiatives reflecting international interest.
	Exports and Veterinary Services	Manage export inspection, audit and certification services for food, non-food commodities and live animal operations. Negotiate technical markets access for food and non-food commodities. Manage agricultural quotas negotiated under Free trade agreements and lead Australia's positions at the Codex Alimentarius Commission for international food standards.
	Digital Business	The Digital Business Division is leading the digital transformation of Australia's agricultural export systems to help get produce to the market faster and cheaper while maintaining the levels of quality that makes Australia's exports world class. Working closely with business teams across the Agriculture Trade Group and across government, they are delivering digital reform by streamlining, improving and overhauling the export experience and internal agency processes. These enhancements will allow digital interaction with the agency and reduce regulatory and cost burden for Australian agricultural exporters.
	Plant and Live Animal Exports, Welfare & Regulation	Supports Australian agriculture industries and the government through export regulatory integrity assurance, export assessment services, food market access, certification management group, development of animal welfare policy for export and domestic issues; management of policy, operations and certification for the export of live animals, animal reproductive material, plants, and plant products and fostering regulatory stewardship across the export related functions.
Biosecurity, Operations and Compliance Group	Biosecurity Plant and Science Services	Safeguarding Australia's plant health status to achieve, maintain and expand access to overseas markets, while protecting the economy and environment from biosecurity risks on imports. The division provides scientific analysis and technical advice, regulates the safe imports of plants and plant products, conducts surveillance, diagnostics and response activities, and provides quarantine services at the world class Post Entry Quarantine facility at Mickleham. Our technical expertise is called upon for a range of national and international purposes including international capability building and standard setting.
	Compliance and Enforcement	Delivers regulatory outcomes that protect Australia from risks to our biosecurity and trade systems. Informed by both science and intelligence we set controls and deliver assurance activities to increase compliance with legislation; and respond appropriately and proportionately to any breaches. We work with internal and external stakeholders

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Group	Division	Description of activities
		across the regulatory continuum responding to known and emerging risks to safeguard Australia's agriculture, economy, trade and way of life.
	Biosecurity Operations	Deliver nationally integrated biosecurity and imported food regulatory activities to ensure goods, conveyances and travellers meet Australia's import requirements. Manage operational policy and front-line regulatory control setting to manage biosecurity and imported food risk. Deliver assessment, inspection, post entry quarantine, stakeholder engagement and client contact centre services. Improve the delivery of those regulatory functions.
Strategy, Enterprise, and Engagement Group	Legal	Responsible for the provision of all legal services and advice required by the department to develop its legislation and deliver its functions.
	Digital Services	Deliver high values, sustainable digital services, reduce complexity and provide secure, reusable, innovative digital services, and solutions to meet business and customer needs.
	People, Property and Security	Support our people and leaders across the employment life cycle by enabling the effective management of people-related risk and building future ready leaders, people, and culture.
	Finance and Investment	The Finance and Investment Division manages all financial activities for the department, including budgeting and reporting, policy and governance, cost recovery, spending and receiving money, debt management, grants, procurement and contract management policy advice, treasury and assets, ensuring financial compliance, payroll, credit cards and travel, the division provides financial systems administration and delivers training to uplift financial acumen across the department, and ensures our people receive strategic financial advice through finance business partners. We build value and relationships through trusted engagements and provide considered financial advice for successful management of our resourcing.
	Strategy Performance and Engagement	Responsible for enterprise and budget strategy, communication and media, and governance and corporate support including parliamentary and ministerial services.
	Transformation Taskforce	Deliver the integrated transformation program and its 4 pillars, the Transformation Action Plan, Statement of Strategic Intent, Organisation Design and Culture as a response to the department's capability review findings.
	Central Funds	Accountable for driving capability development across the department, including learning and development, talent management, and leadership growth initiatives.

References

DAFF 2023, [Budget 2023–24, Securing the future of agricultural trade \(PDF 208 KB\)](#), Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra, accessed 24 December 2025.

DAWE 2020, [Budget 2020–21: Busting Congestion for Agricultural Exporters \(PDF 211 KB\)](#), Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Canberra, accessed 24 December 2025.