

# Grain Transportation Report

A weekly publication of the Agricultural Marketing Service  
www.ams.usda.gov/GTR

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## WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

### Grain Inspections Continue to Increase

For the week ending September 28, **total inspections of grain** (corn, wheat, and soybeans) for export from major U.S. export regions reached 2.41 million metric tons (mmt), up 2 percent from the previous week, down 28 percent from the same time last year, and 5 percent above the 3-year average. The increase in grain inspections was helped by a 38 percent increase in wheat inspections, shipped primarily to Asia. Although corn inspections were unchanged, soybean inspections decreased 14 percent from the previous week. Pacific Northwest (PNW) inspections jumped 98 percent from the past week due to an increase in wheat and corn inspections. Mississippi Gulf inspections were down 6 percent from the previous week. Outstanding (unshipped) export sales were up for wheat and soybeans but down for corn.

### Cargill Expands Facility on Union Pacific Line

Cargill [announced](#) plans to invest \$18 million to increase storage and unload capacity at its facility in Gibbon, NE. The project is slated to add 2 million bushels of upright grain storage space and increase unload capacity to 65,000 bushels per hour. The facility handles corn, soybeans, and wheat. In the press release, Cargill's Jim Reiff said, "The Gibbon area features high production, mostly irrigated farm ground that historically produced consistently high yields. We're excited to expand our capabilities and improve service to growers in the area. In addition, the facility is on the Union Pacific mainline rail, connecting our growers to export markets in the U.S. Gulf, Pacific Northwest, and Mexico, and helping to meet the needs of key end user customers in California." The project is expected to be completed by early 2019, with no shutdowns planned throughout construction.

### STB Proposes Modifying Regulations on Ex Parte Communications in Informal Rulemaking Proceedings

On September 28, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) [issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) (NPRM), proposing to modify its long-standing rules to permit ex parte communications in informal rulemaking proceedings. The NPRM also includes other changes to STB's ex parte rules that would clarify and update when and how interested persons may communicate informally with the STB regarding pending proceedings other than rulemakings. According to the decision, "The intent of the proposed regulations is to enhance the Board's ability to make informed decisions through increased stakeholder communications while ensuring that the Board's record-building process in rulemaking proceedings remains transparent and fair." Comments regarding the NPRM are due by November 1, 2017, and reply comments by November 16, 2017.

## Snapshots by Sector

### Export Sales

For the week ending September 21, **unshipped balances** of wheat, corn, and soybeans totaled 33.3 mmt, down 23 percent from the same time last year. Net weekly **wheat export sales** were .436 mmt, up 42 percent from the previous week. Net **corn export sales** were .320 mmt, down 39 percent from the previous week, and net **soybean export sales** were 3 mmt, up 30 percent from the previous week.

**Containerized grain exports** to Asia in July were just over 31,000 twenty-foot equivalent unit, 33.7 percent lower than the previous year, 35 percent lower than the 5-year average, and 20.7 percent lower than June movements.

### Rail

U.S. Class I railroads originated 19,612 **grain carloads** for the week ending September 23, down 6 percent from the previous week, down 22 percent from last year, and down 12 percent from the 3-year average.

Average October shuttle **secondary railcar** bids/offers per car were \$285 above tariff for the week ending September 28, down \$227 from last week, and \$915 lower than last year. Average non-shuttle secondary railcar bids/offers per car were \$31 above tariff, \$88 lower than last year. There were no non-shuttle bids/offers last week.

### Barge

For the week ending September 30, **barge grain movements** totaled 820,688 tons, 139 percent higher than the previous week, and up 18 percent from the same period last year.

For the week ending September 30, 532 grain barges **moved down river**, up 141 percent from last week, 722 grain barges were **unloaded in New Orleans**, down 4 percent from the previous week.

### Ocean

For the week ending September 28, 42 **ocean-going grain vessels** were loaded in the Gulf, unchanged from the same period last year. Sixty-four vessels are expected to be loaded within the next 10 days, 17 percent less than the same period last year.

For the week ending September 28, the ocean freight rate for shipping bulk grain from the Gulf to Japan was \$42.25 per metric ton, 1 percent less than the previous week. The cost of shipping from the PNW to Japan was \$23.50 per metric ton, 2 percent less than the previous week.

### Fuel

During the week ending October 2, average **diesel fuel prices** remain almost unchanged from the previous week at \$2.79 per gallon, 40 cents above the same week last year.

# Feature Article/Calendar

## Low Water Impacts on Barge Navigation

Dry weather throughout the central United States has caused low water levels on much of the Mississippi River System in recent weeks. Stretches of the Mississippi, Ohio, and Illinois Rivers are experiencing reduced barge capabilities, as the lower river levels are reducing the width and depths of portions of the navigation channels, resulting in light loading and reduced barge capacity. In addition, required maintenance work by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is slowing barge traffic on the lower Ohio River, the Mississippi River between St. Louis, MO, and the mouth of the Ohio River. All these factors have increased spot barge rates.

### River Levels, Repairs, and Restrictions

Much of the river system is currently experiencing low water conditions. Figure 1 shows the 2017 river gage at St. Louis is well below the 2008-16 average.<sup>1</sup> As of October 4, the St. Louis gage was 3.97 feet, a level that is slowing barge traffic and reducing towing capacity.

On-going repair work on the locks and dams on the lower Ohio River is causing extensive backlog of traffic (Figure 2). Locks and Dam (L&D) 53, the last lock for downbound grain on the Ohio River, is experiencing delays of several days. L&D 53 is not used often, as water levels are usually high enough for barges to pass without using the lock. However, water levels are now low

enough to require the use of the lock and results in slower barge movements. Furthermore, the current use of the lock has resulted in several atypical “on and off again” repair needs that has temporarily stopped traffic from time to time in recent days. Presently, the Corps is dumping rock in the river at L&D 52 to form a barrier that will reduce river flow speeds and allow the dam to be completely functional.

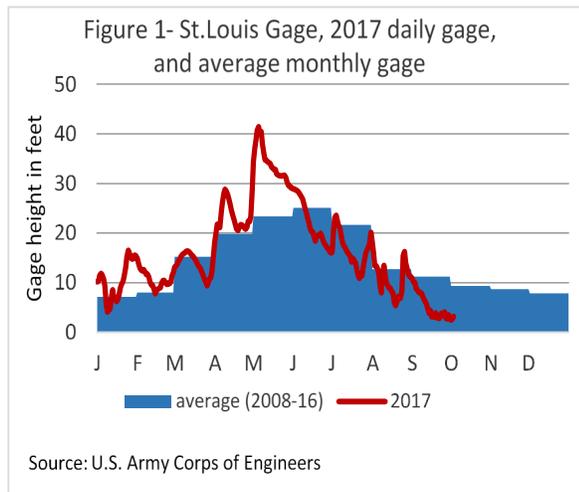


Figure 2. Major river cities and locations of navigation disruptions



In another area of the river system, the Corps has begun operations to remove rock formations below the surface of the Mississippi River near Thebes, IL. Rock removal operations will run from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., during which downbound tows are restricted to 15 barges and upbound tows are limited to 28 barges. During non-work hours, tows may pass unrestricted, but delays may occur nevertheless. These rock formations, called pinnacles, were a major issue when low water threatened to stop navigation from drought conditions affected the river in late 2012 and early 2013. At that time, the Corps removed most of the pinnacles on an emergency basis, but could not remove them all when rains returned and water

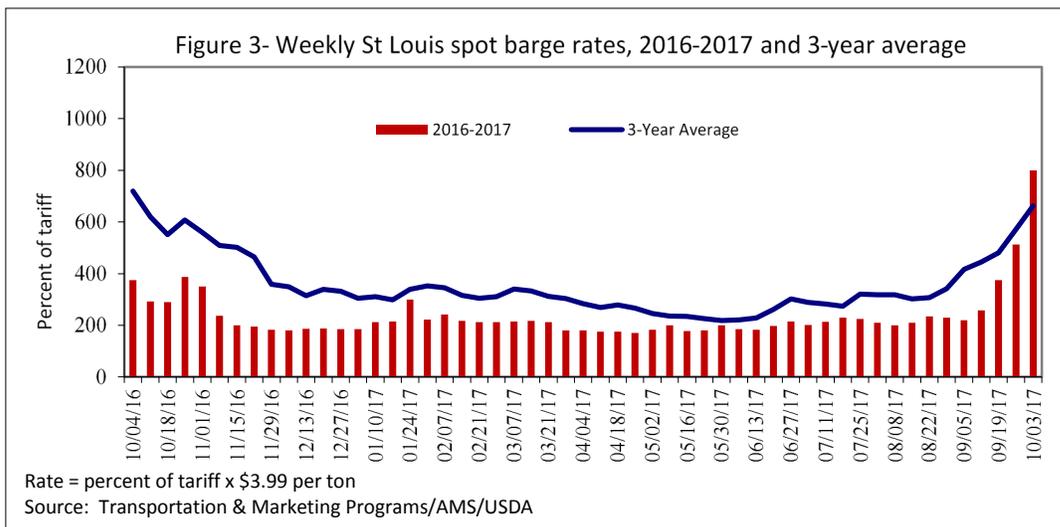
<sup>1</sup> For data on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gage levels, see: <http://rivergages.mvr.usace.army.mil/WaterControl/new/layout.cfm>.

increased. Since water levels in that area are now low enough, the Corps is now removing the remaining pinnacles.

The Coast Guard has also issued restrictions for Mississippi River barge traffic in the Memphis to Vicksburg area. Tows in this area are limited to 30 barges downbound and 42 barges upbound. The Coast Guard is requiring placement of loaded barges in the center of the tow; and is limiting movements to drafts of no greater than 10 feet. Figure 2 shows the locations of the various disruption points.

### Grain Barge Spot Rates Surge

As of October 3, spot barge rates for export grain from major originating areas increased 103 to 412 percent since the beginning of September. Figure 3 shows the significant increases during the last several weeks for St. Louis spot barge rates, which are currently at 800 percent of tariff (\$31.92 per ton). Figure 3 shows that last week was the only week that rates were above average for the last 52 weeks. Rates elsewhere on the system have also increased, as the barge supply has unexpectedly tightened with barges carrying less grain and traveling at greatly reduced transit times. However, if significant rains come in future weeks, this could raise water levels again, improving barge logistics and having a dampening effect on spot barge rates. Rates will also likely fluctuate as the market adjusts to seasonal demand and logistic disruptions.



### Importance of Barge Transportation to Grain Exports

Barge movements are important for delivering grain from interior production regions to coastal areas for export to foreign countries. In 2013, barges on the U.S. inland waterways delivered 61 percent of all corn exports and 42 percent of all soybean exports. In the Pacific Northwest, wheat is an important commodity for barge traffic on the Columbia River, which is currently not affected by low water conditions. If disruptions of barge traffic continue, grain shippers may need to rely on more expensive options of shipping grain, either by rail to Pacific Northwest ports for export, or using rail to move grain to points south of the bottlenecked sections of the river.

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# Grain Transportation Indicators

Table 1

## Grain Transport Cost Indicators<sup>1</sup>

For the week ending	Truck	Rail	Barge	Ocean	
		Unit Train	Shuttle	Gulf	Pacific
10/04/17	187	287	226	189	167
09/27/17	187	292	232	191	170

<sup>1</sup>Indicator: Base year 2000 = 100; Weekly updates include truck = diesel (\$/gallon); rail = near-month secondary rail market bid and monthly tariff rate with fuel surcharge (\$/car); barge = Illinois River barge rate (index = percent of tariff rate); and ocean = routes to Japan (\$/metric ton)

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Table 2

## Market Update: U.S. Origins to Export Position Price Spreads (\$/bushel)

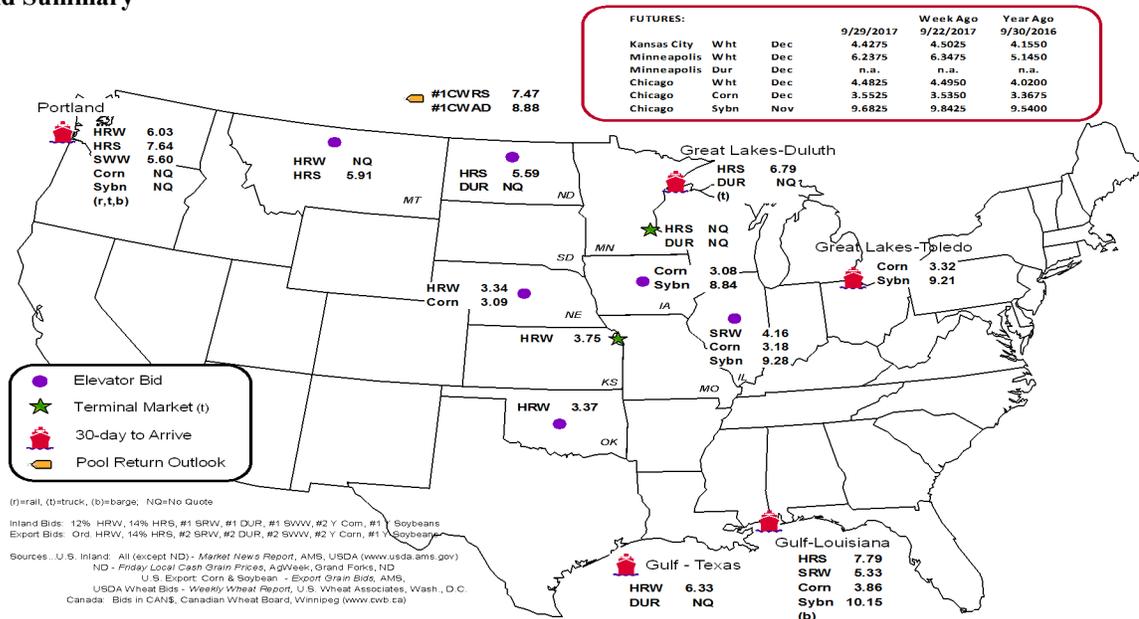
Commodity	Origin--Destination	9/29/2017	9/22/2017
Corn	IL--Gulf	-0.68	-0.58
Corn	NE--Gulf	-0.77	-0.68
Soybean	IA--Gulf	-1.31	-1.28
HRW	KS--Gulf	-2.58	-2.58
HRS	ND--Portland	-2.05	-2.15

Note: nq = no quote; n/a = not available

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

The **grain bid summary** illustrates the market relationships for commodities. Positive and negative adjustments in differential between terminal and futures markets, and the relationship to inland market points, are indicators of changes in fundamental market supply and demand. The map may be used to monitor market and time differentials.

Figure 1  
Grain Bid Summary



# Rail Transportation

Table 3

## Rail Deliveries to Port (carloads)<sup>1</sup>

For the Week Ending	Mississippi		Pacific	Atlantic &	Total	Week ending	Cross-Border
	Gulf	Texas Gulf	Northwest	East Gulf			Mexico <sup>3</sup>
09/27/2017 <sup>p</sup>	337	1,514	3,626	185	5,662	9/23/2017	2,916
09/20/2017 <sup>f</sup>	530	2,136	2,843	250	5,759	9/16/2017	3,506
2017 YTD <sup>f</sup>	18,787	63,636	207,251	13,878	303,552	2017 YTD	91,410
2016 YTD <sup>f</sup>	17,573	61,094	203,492	13,363	295,522	2016 YTD	80,157
2017 YTD as % of 2016 YTD	107	104	102	104	103	% change YTD	114
Last 4 weeks as % of 2016 <sup>2</sup>	37	61	46	78	50	Last 4wks % 2016	118
Last 4 weeks as % of 4-year avg <sup>2</sup>	94	80	74	107	78	Last 4wks % 4 yr	145
Total 2016	36,925	86,992	299,932	28,728	452,577	Total 2016	92,982
Total 2015	29,054	60,819	239,029	26,730	355,632	Total 2015	97,736

<sup>1</sup> Data is incomplete as it is voluntarily provided

<sup>2</sup> Compared with same 4-weeks in 2016 and prior 4-year average.

<sup>3</sup> Cross-border weekly data is approximately 15 percent below the Association of American Railroads' reported weekly carloads received by Mexican railroads to reflect switching between KCSM and FerroMex.

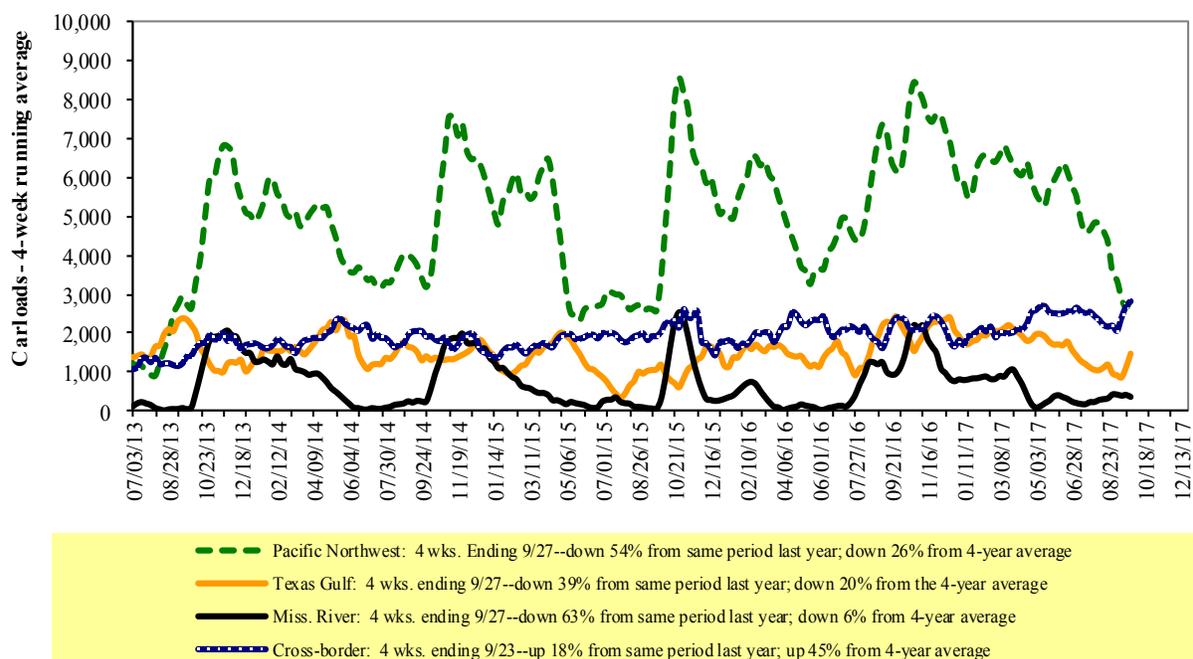
YTD = year-to-date; p = preliminary data; r = revised data; n/a = not available

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Railroads originate approximately 24 percent of U.S. grain shipments. Trends in these loadings are indicative of market conditions and expectations.

Figure 2

## Rail Deliveries to Port



Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Table 4

**Class I Rail Carrier Grain Car Bulletin (grain carloads originated)**

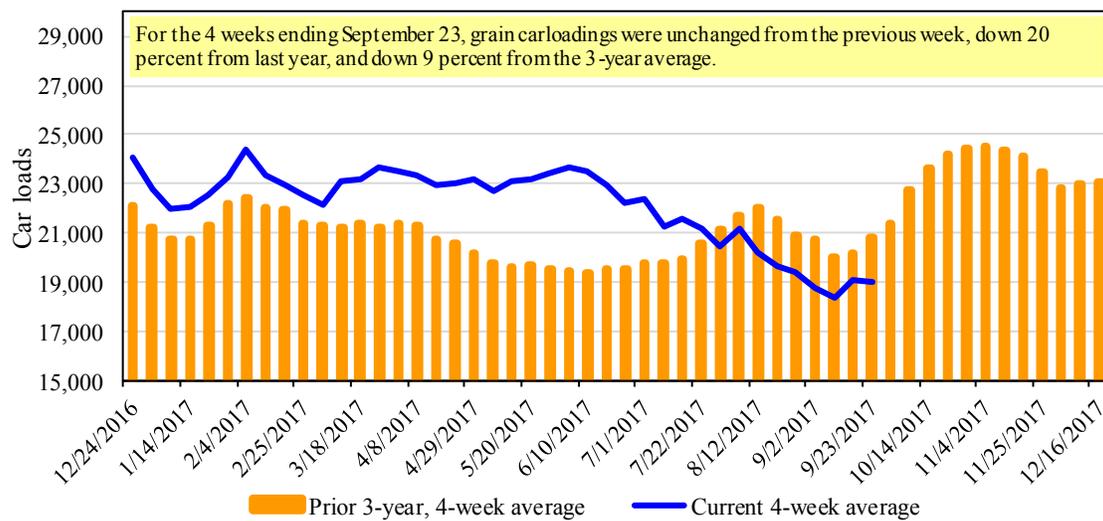
For the week ending: 9/23/2017	East		West			U.S. total	Canada	
	CSXT	NS	BNSF	KCS	UP		CN	CP
This week	1,073	2,162	9,926	861	5,590	19,612	2,913	4,171
This week last year	2,129	2,225	13,156	1,369	6,250	25,129	4,130	6,090
2017 YTD	61,671	103,691	419,058	35,699	215,940	836,059	141,929	172,465
2016 YTD	63,866	103,519	420,318	32,325	209,707	829,735	126,658	164,816
2017 YTD as % of 2016 YTD	97	100	100	110	103	101	112	105
Last 4 weeks as % of 2016*	79	109	76	109	75	80	95	94
Last 4 weeks as % of 3-yr avg**	84	111	89	101	89	91	91	96
Total 2016	95,179	151,019	590,779	45,246	300,836	1,183,059	193,789	234,738

\*The past 4 weeks of this year as a percent of the same 4 weeks last year.

\*\*The past 4 weeks as a percent of the same period from the prior 3-year average. YTD = year-to-date.

Source: Association of American Railroads (www.aar.org)

Figure 3

**Total Weekly U.S. Class I Railroad Grain Car Loadings**

Source: Association of American Railroads

Table 5

**Railcar Auction Offerings<sup>1</sup> (\$/car)<sup>2</sup>**

For the week ending: 9/28/2017		Delivery period							
		Oct-17	Oct-16	Nov-17	Nov-16	Dec-17	Dec-16	Jan-18	Jan-17
BNSF <sup>3</sup>	COT grain units	no bids	no offer	no bids	no offer	no bids	no bids	0	no bids
	COT grain single-car <sup>5</sup>	0	179	0	no offer	no bids	no bids	no bids	9
UP <sup>4</sup>	GCAS/Region 1	no bids	no offer	no bids	no offer	10	no offer	n/a	n/a
	GCAS/Region 2	10	no offer	no bids	no offer	no bids	no offer	n/a	n/a

<sup>1</sup>Auction offerings are for single-car and unit train shipments only.

<sup>2</sup>Average premium/discount to tariff, last auction

<sup>3</sup>BNSF - COT = Certificate of Transportation; north grain and south grain bids were combined effective the week ending 6/24/06.

<sup>4</sup>UP - GCAS = Grain Car Allocation System

Region 1 includes: AR, IL, LA, MO, NM, OK, TX, WI, and Duluth, MN.

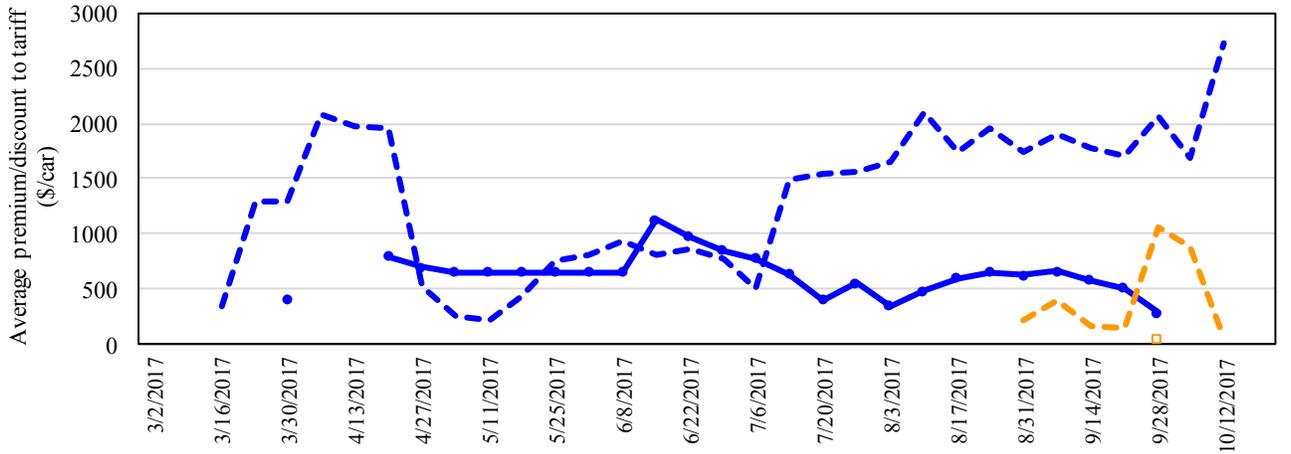
Region 2 includes: CO, IA, KS, MN, NE, WY, and Kansas City and St. Joseph, MO.

<sup>5</sup>Range is shown because average is not available. Not available = n/a.

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA.

The **secondary rail market** information reflects trade values for service that was originally purchased from the railroad carrier as some form of guaranteed freight. The **auction and secondary rail** values are indicators of rail service quality and demand/supply.

**Figure 4**  
**Bids/Offers for Railcars to be Delivered in October 2017, Secondary Market**



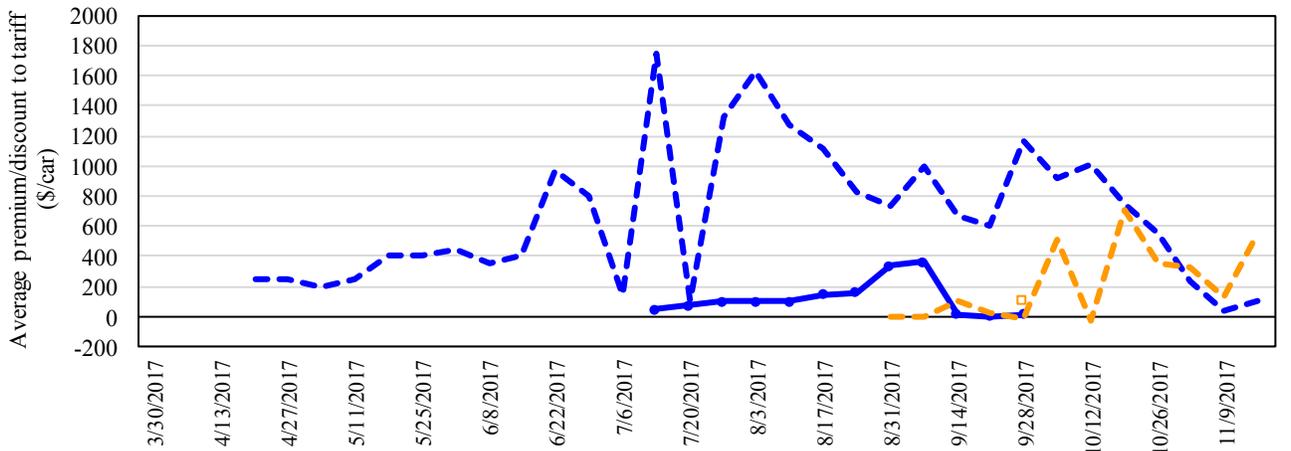
	9/28/2017	BNSF	UP
<b>Non-Shuttle</b>	-\$38		\$100
<b>Shuttle</b>	\$354		\$217

—●— Shuttle  
- - - Shuttle prior 3-yr avg. (same week)  
—□— Non-Shuttle  
- - - Non-Shuttle prior 3-yr avg. (same week)

There were no Non-Shuttle bids/offers last week. Average Non-Shuttle bids/offers this week are at the peak. Average Shuttle bids/offers fell \$227 this week and are \$840 below the peak.

Non-shuttle bids include unit-train and single-car bids. n/a = not available.  
 Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

**Figure 5**  
**Bids/Offers for Railcars to be Delivered in November 2017, Secondary Market**



	9/28/2017	BNSF	UP
<b>Non-Shuttle</b>	n/a		\$100
<b>Shuttle</b>	\$63		-\$33

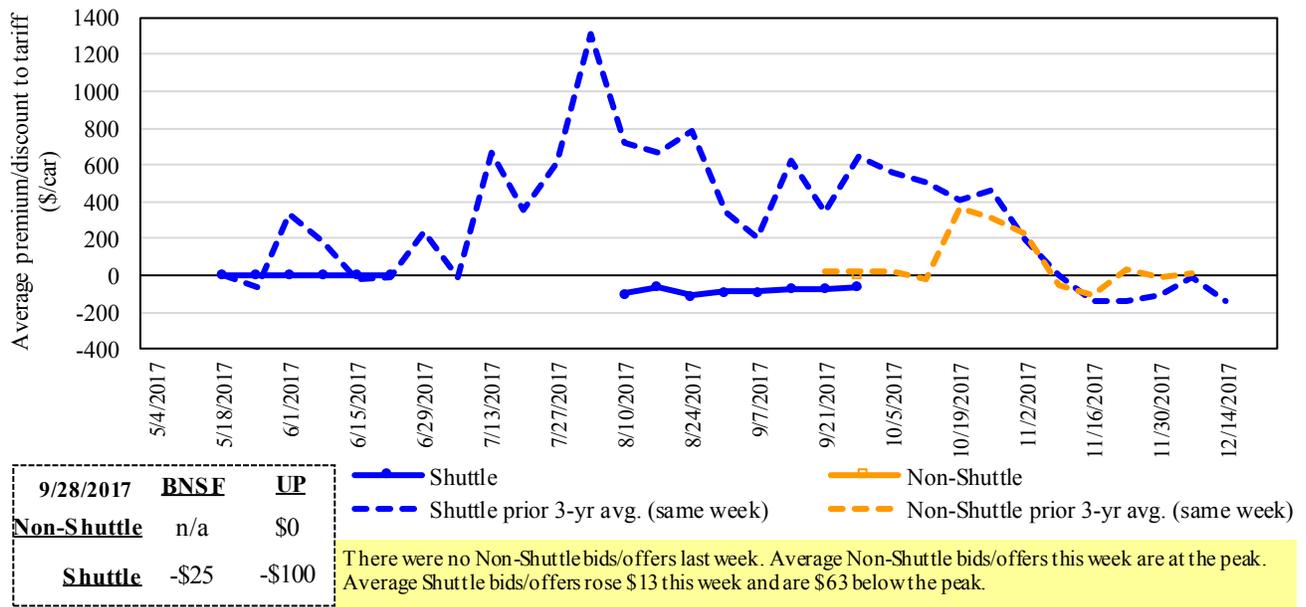
—●— Shuttle  
- - - Shuttle prior 3-yr avg. (same week)  
—□— Non-Shuttle  
- - - Non-Shuttle prior 3-yr avg. (same week)

There were no Non-Shuttle bids/offers last week. Average Non-Shuttle bids/offers this week are at the peak. Average Shuttle bids/offers rose \$15 this week and are \$348 below the peak.

Non-shuttle bids include unit-train and single-car bids. n/a = not available.  
 Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Figure 6

**Bids/Offers for Railcars to be Delivered in December 2017, Secondary Market**



Non-shuttle bids include unit-train and single-car bids. n/a = not available.  
 Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Table 6

**Weekly Secondary Railcar Market (\$/car)<sup>1</sup>**

For the week ending: 9/28/2017		Delivery period					
		Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
Non-shuttle	<b>BNSF-GF</b>	<b>(38)</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Change from last week	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Change from same week 2016	(156)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<b>UP-Pool</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
	Change from last week	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Change from same week 2016	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Shuttle	<b>BNSF-GF</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>(25)</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
	Change from last week	(71)	63	25	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Change from same week 2016	(946)	(688)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<b>UP-Pool</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>(33)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
	Change from last week	(383)	(33)	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Change from same week 2016	(883)	(333)	(100)	n/a	n/a	n/a

<sup>1</sup> Average premium/discount to tariff, \$/car-last week

Note: Bids listed are market INDICATORS only & are NOT guaranteed prices,

n/a = not available; GF = guaranteed freight; Pool = guaranteed pool

Sources: Transportation and Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Data from James B. Joiner Co., Tradewest Brokerage Co.

The **tariff rail rate** is the base price of freight rail service, and together with **fuel surcharges** and any **auction and secondary rail** values constitute the full cost of shipping by rail. Typically, auction and secondary rail values are a small fraction of the full cost of shipping by rail relative to the tariff rate. High auction and secondary rail values, during times of high rail demand or short supply, can exceed the cost of the tariff rate plus fuel surcharge.

Table 7

**Tariff Rail Rates for Unit and Shuttle Train Shipments<sup>1</sup>**

October, 2017	Origin region <sup>3</sup>	Destination region <sup>3</sup>	Tariff rate/car	Fuel surcharge per car	Tariff plus surcharge per:		Percent change Y/Y <sup>4</sup>
					metric ton	bushel <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Unit train</b>							
Wheat	Wichita, KS	St. Louis, MO	\$3,883	\$51	\$39.06	\$1.06	4
	Grand Forks, ND	Duluth-Superior, MN	\$4,143	\$0	\$41.14	\$1.12	0
	Wichita, KS	Los Angeles, CA	\$7,050	\$0	\$70.01	\$1.91	1
	Wichita, KS	New Orleans, LA	\$4,540	\$89	\$45.97	\$1.25	4
	Sioux Falls, SD	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$6,786	\$0	\$67.39	\$1.83	5
	Northwest KS	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$4,816	\$98	\$48.79	\$1.33	4
	Amarillo, TX	Los Angeles, CA	\$5,021	\$136	\$51.21	\$1.39	4
Corn	Champaign-Urbana, IL	New Orleans, LA	\$3,931	\$101	\$40.04	\$1.02	8
	Toledo, OH	Raleigh, NC	\$6,344	\$0	\$63.00	\$1.60	5
	Des Moines, IA	Davenport, IA	\$2,258	\$21	\$22.63	\$0.57	0
	Indianapolis, IN	Atlanta, GA	\$5,446	\$0	\$54.08	\$1.37	5
	Indianapolis, IN	Knoxville, TN	\$4,540	\$0	\$45.08	\$1.15	5
	Des Moines, IA	Little Rock, AR	\$3,609	\$63	\$36.46	\$0.93	3
	Des Moines, IA	Los Angeles, CA	\$5,327	\$182	\$54.71	\$1.39	4
Soybeans	Minneapolis, MN	New Orleans, LA	\$3,634	\$74	\$36.83	\$1.00	-6
	Toledo, OH	Huntsville, AL	\$5,287	\$0	\$52.50	\$1.43	5
	Indianapolis, IN	Raleigh, NC	\$6,460	\$0	\$64.15	\$1.75	5
	Indianapolis, IN	Huntsville, AL	\$4,764	\$0	\$47.31	\$1.29	5
	Champaign-Urbana, IL	New Orleans, LA	\$4,745	\$101	\$48.12	\$1.31	6
<b>Shuttle Train</b>							
Wheat	Great Falls, MT	Portland, OR	\$3,953	\$0	\$39.26	\$1.07	0
	Wichita, KS	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$4,171	\$0	\$41.42	\$1.13	8
	Chicago, IL	Albany, NY	\$5,663	\$0	\$56.24	\$1.53	3
	Grand Forks, ND	Portland, OR	\$5,611	\$0	\$55.72	\$1.52	0
	Grand Forks, ND	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$5,931	\$0	\$58.90	\$1.60	0
	Northwest KS	Portland, OR	\$5,812	\$160	\$59.30	\$1.61	4
Corn	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$5,000	\$0	\$49.65	\$1.26	0
	Sioux Falls, SD	Tacoma, WA	\$4,960	\$0	\$49.26	\$1.25	0
	Champaign-Urbana, IL	New Orleans, LA	\$3,731	\$101	\$38.05	\$0.97	8
	Lincoln, NE	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$3,700	\$0	\$36.74	\$0.93	0
	Des Moines, IA	Amarillo, TX	\$3,970	\$79	\$40.21	\$1.02	3
	Minneapolis, MN	Tacoma, WA	\$5,000	\$0	\$49.65	\$1.26	0
	Council Bluffs, IA	Stockton, CA	\$4,820	\$0	\$47.86	\$1.22	2
	Sioux Falls, SD	Tacoma, WA	\$5,600	\$0	\$55.61	\$1.51	0
Soybeans	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$5,650	\$0	\$56.11	\$1.53	0
	Fargo, ND	Tacoma, WA	\$5,500	\$0	\$54.62	\$1.49	0
	Council Bluffs, IA	New Orleans, LA	\$4,775	\$116	\$48.57	\$1.32	6
	Grand Island, NE	Portland, OR	\$5,710	\$164	\$58.33	\$1.59	6

<sup>1</sup>A unit train refers to shipments of at least 25 cars. Shuttle train rates are generally available for qualified shipments of 75-120 cars that meet railroad efficiency requirements.

<sup>2</sup>Approximate load per car = 111 short tons (100.7 metric tons): corn 56 lbs./bu., wheat and soybeans 60 lbs./bu.

<sup>3</sup>Regional economic areas are defined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

<sup>4</sup>Percentage change year over year calculated using tariff rate plus fuel surcharge

Sources: www.bnsf.com, www.cn.ca, www.csx.com, www.up.com

Table 8

**Tariff Rail Rates for U.S. Bulk Grain Shipments to Mexico**

Commodity	Origin state	Destination region	Tariff rate/car <sup>1</sup>	Fuel		Percent change <sup>4</sup> Y/Y
				surcharge per car <sup>2</sup>	Tariff plus surcharge per: metric ton <sup>3</sup> / bushel <sup>3</sup>	
Date: October, 2017						
Wheat	MT	Chihuahua, CI	\$7,459	\$0	\$76.21 / \$2.07	0
	OK	Cuautitlan, EM	\$6,631	\$70	\$68.46 / \$1.86	1
	KS	Guadalajara, JA	\$7,309	\$261	\$77.35 / \$2.10	5
	TX	Salinas Victoria, NL	\$4,292	\$43	\$44.29 / \$1.20	3
Corn	IA	Guadalajara, JA	\$8,293	\$216	\$86.94 / \$2.21	3
	SD	Celaya, GJ	\$7,700	\$0	\$78.68 / \$2.00	2
	NE	Queretaro, QA	\$8,013	\$145	\$83.36 / \$2.12	2
	SD	Salinas Victoria, NL	\$6,743	\$0	\$68.90 / \$1.75	2
	MO	Tlalnepantla, EM	\$7,379	\$142	\$76.85 / \$1.95	2
	SD	Torreon, CU	\$7,300	\$0	\$74.59 / \$1.89	2
Soybeans	MO	Bojay (Tula), HG	\$8,134	\$203	\$85.18 / \$2.32	-5
	NE	Guadalajara, JA	\$8,692	\$218	\$91.03 / \$2.47	-2
	IA	El Castillo, JA	\$8,960	\$0	\$91.55 / \$2.49	0
	KS	Torreon, CU	\$7,489	\$152	\$78.07 / \$2.12	1
Sorghum	NE	Celaya, GJ	\$7,345	\$195	\$77.03 / \$1.95	4
	KS	Queretaro, QA	\$7,819	\$87	\$80.78 / \$2.05	3
	NE	Salinas Victoria, NL	\$6,452	\$70	\$66.63 / \$1.69	4
	NE	Torreon, CU	\$6,790	\$143	\$70.83 / \$1.80	4

<sup>1</sup>Rates are based upon published tariff rates for high-capacity shuttle trains. Shuttle trains are available for qualified shipments of 75--110 cars that meet railroad efficiency requirements.

<sup>2</sup>Fuel surcharge adjusted to reflect the change in Ferrocarril Mexicano, S.A. de C.V railroad fuel surcharge policy as of 10/01/2009.

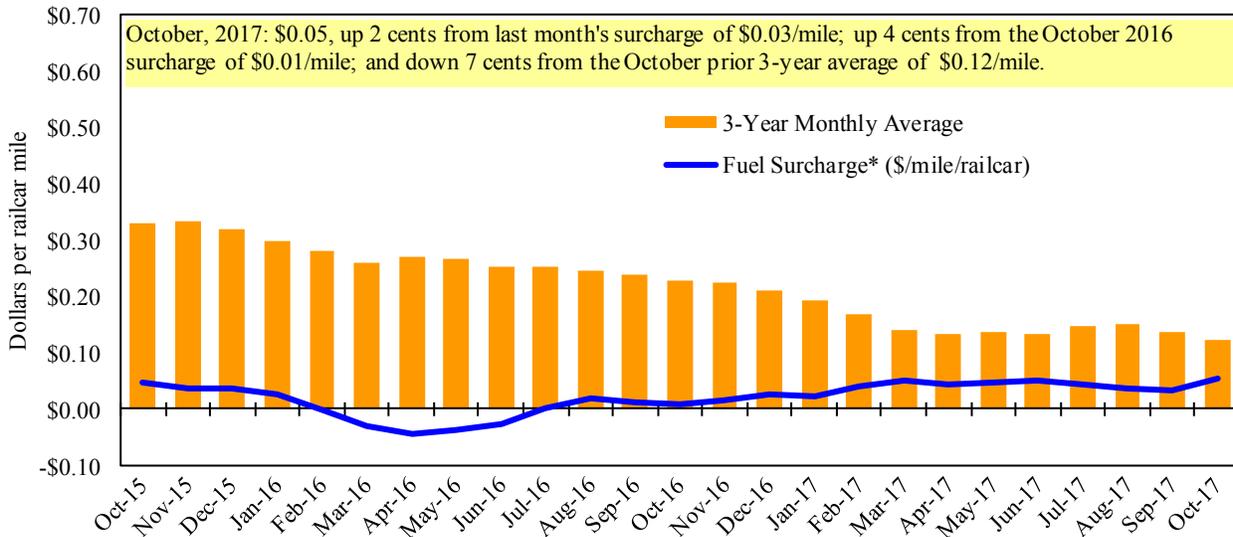
<sup>3</sup>Approximate load per car = 97.87 metric tons: Corn & Sorghum 56 lbs/bu, Wheat & Soybeans 60 lbs/bu

<sup>4</sup>Percentage change calculated using tariff rate plus fuel surcharge

Sources: www.bnsf.com, www.uprr.com, www.kcsouthern.com

Figure 7

**Railroad Fuel Surcharges, North American Weighted Average<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Weighted by each Class I railroad's proportion of grain traffic for the prior year.

\* Beginning January 2009, the Canadian Pacific fuel surcharge is computed by a monthly average of the bi-weekly fuel surcharge.

\*\*CSX strike price changed from \$2.00/gal. to \$3.75/gal. starting January 1, 2015.

Sources: www.bnsf.com, www.cn.ca, www.cpr.ca, www.csx.com, www.kcsi.com, www.nscorp.com, www.uprr.com

# Barge Transportation

Figure 8

## Illinois River Barge Freight Rate<sup>1,2</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Rate = percent of 1976 tariff benchmark index (1976 = 100 percent); <sup>2</sup>4-week moving average of the 3-year average.

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Table 9

### Weekly Barge Freight Rates: Southbound Only

		Twin Cities	Mid-Mississippi	Lower Illinois River	St. Louis	Cincinnati	Lower Ohio	Cairo-Memphis
<b>Rate<sup>1</sup></b>	10/3/2017	763	788	775	800	1,013	1,013	1,075
	9/26/2017	600	575	613	513	625	625	475
<b>\$/ton</b>	10/3/2017	47.23	41.92	35.96	31.92	47.51	40.93	33.76
	9/26/2017	37.14	30.59	28.44	20.47	29.31	25.25	14.92
<b>Current week % change from the same week:</b>								
	Last year	61	58	77	113	131	131	179
	3-year avg. <sup>2</sup>	26	25	23	40	53	53	90
<b>Rate<sup>1</sup></b>	October	738	700	700	675	738	738	575
	December	-	-	350	275	325	325	263

<sup>1</sup>Rate = percent of 1976 tariff benchmark index (1976 = 100 percent); <sup>2</sup>4-week moving average; ton = 2,000 pounds; "-" = closed

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Figure 9

### Benchmark tariff rates

#### Calculating barge rate per ton:

$$(\text{Rate} * 1976 \text{ tariff benchmark rate per ton}) / 100$$

Select applicable index from market quotes included in tables on this page. The 1976 benchmark rates per ton are provided in map.

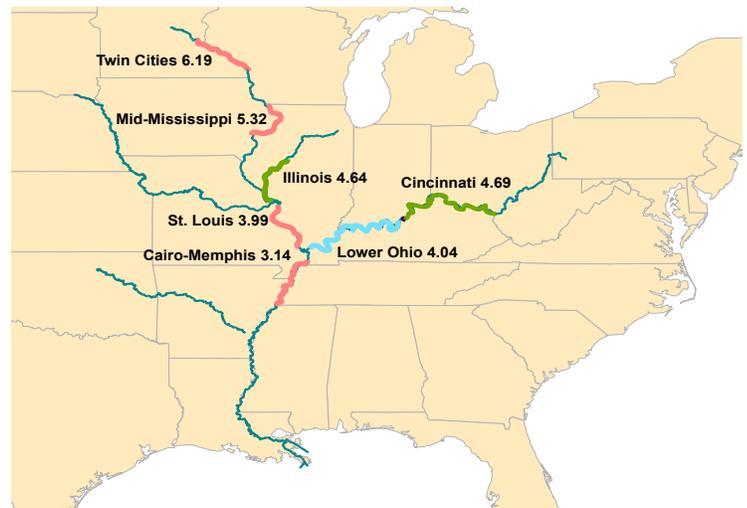
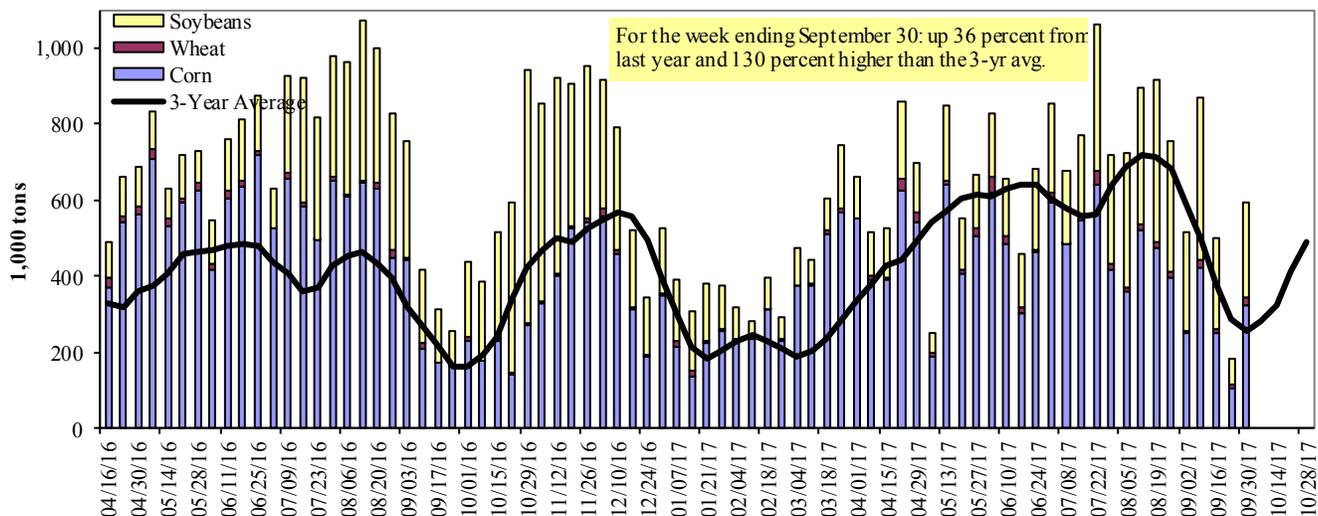


Figure 10

**Barge Movements on the Mississippi River<sup>1</sup> (Locks 27 - Granite City, IL)**



<sup>1</sup> The 3-year average is a 4-week moving average.

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Table 10

**Barge Grain Movements (1,000 tons)**

For the week ending 9/30/2017	Corn	Wheat	Soybeans	Other	Total
<b>Mississippi River</b>					
Rock Island, IL (L15)	33	9	51	0	93
Winfield, MO (L25)	134	17	130	0	280
Alton, IL (L26)	291	17	228	12	548
Granite City, IL (L27)	325	17	251	12	606
<b>Illinois River (L8)</b>	70	0	58	0	128
<b>Ohio River (L52)</b>	40	0	58	0	98
<b>Arkansas River (L1)</b>	0	45	71	0	116
Weekly total - 2017	366	62	381	12	821
Weekly total - 2016	348	19	318	11	695
2017 YTD <sup>1</sup>	17,962	1,946	10,583	240	30,731
2016 YTD	18,889	1,722	9,347	275	30,233
2017 as % of 2016 YTD	95	113	113	87	102
Last 4 weeks as % of 2016 <sup>2</sup>	104	120	151	55	123
Total 2016	24,136	2,030	16,668	344	43,178

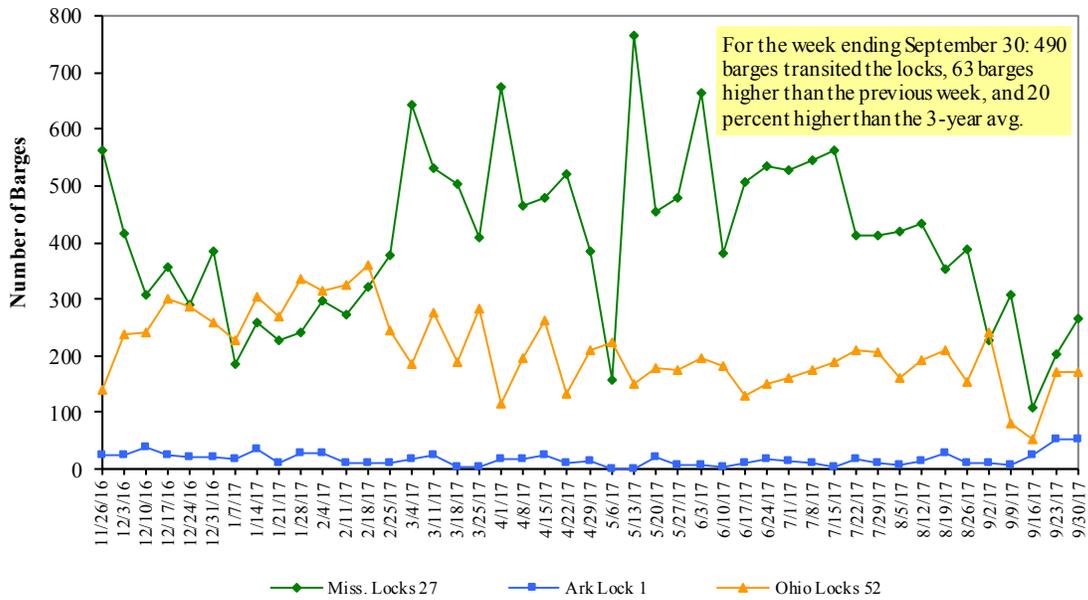
<sup>1</sup> Weekly total, YTD (year-to-date) and calendar year total includes Miss/27, Ohio/52, and Ark/1; "Other" refers to oats, barley, sorghum, and rye.

<sup>2</sup> As a percent of same period in 2016.

Note: Total may not add exactly, due to rounding

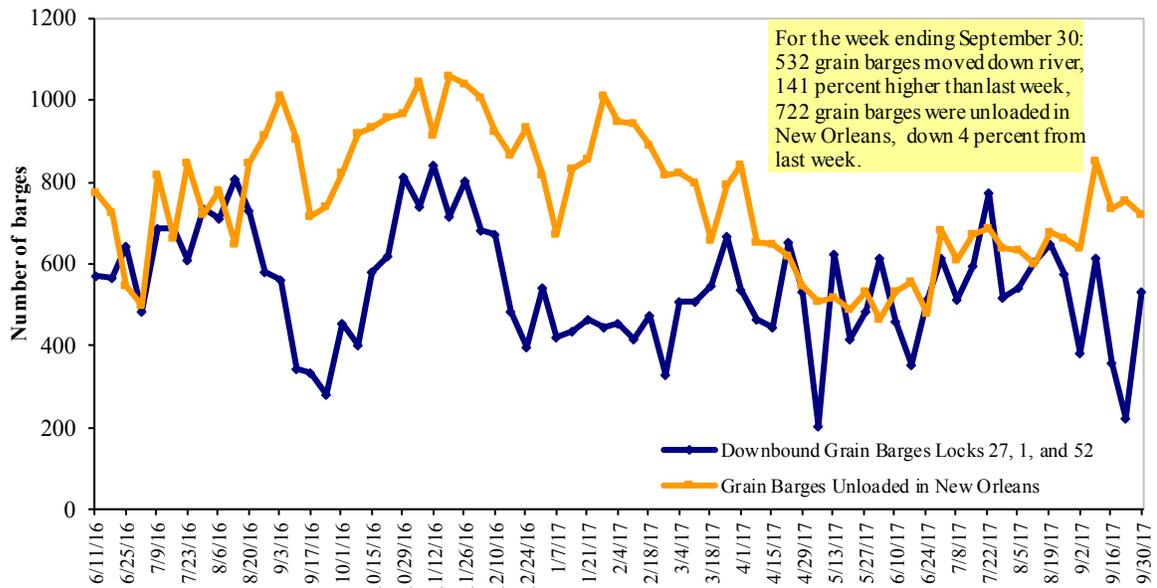
Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Figure 11  
**Upbound Empty Barges Transiting Mississippi River Locks 27, Arkansas River Lock and Dam 1, and Ohio River Locks and Dam 52**



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Figure 12  
**Grain Barges for Export in New Orleans Region**



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and GIPSA

# Truck Transportation

The **weekly diesel price** provides a proxy for trends in U.S. truck rates as diesel fuel is a significant expense for truck grain movements.

Table 11

## Retail on-Highway Diesel Prices<sup>1</sup>, Week Ending 10/2/2017(US \$/gallon)

Region	Location	Price	Change from	
			Week ago	Year ago
I	East Coast	2.819	0.008	0.421
	New England	2.767	0.005	0.353
	Central Atlantic	2.934	0.009	0.448
	Lower Atlantic	2.748	0.008	0.421
II	Midwest <sup>2</sup>	2.747	0.006	0.391
III	Gulf Coast <sup>3</sup>	2.615	-0.009	0.365
IV	Rocky Mountain	2.860	0.028	0.393
V	West Coast	3.109	0.006	0.451
	West Coast less California	3.018	0.010	0.494
	California	3.182	0.002	0.416
Total	U.S.	2.792	0.004	0.403

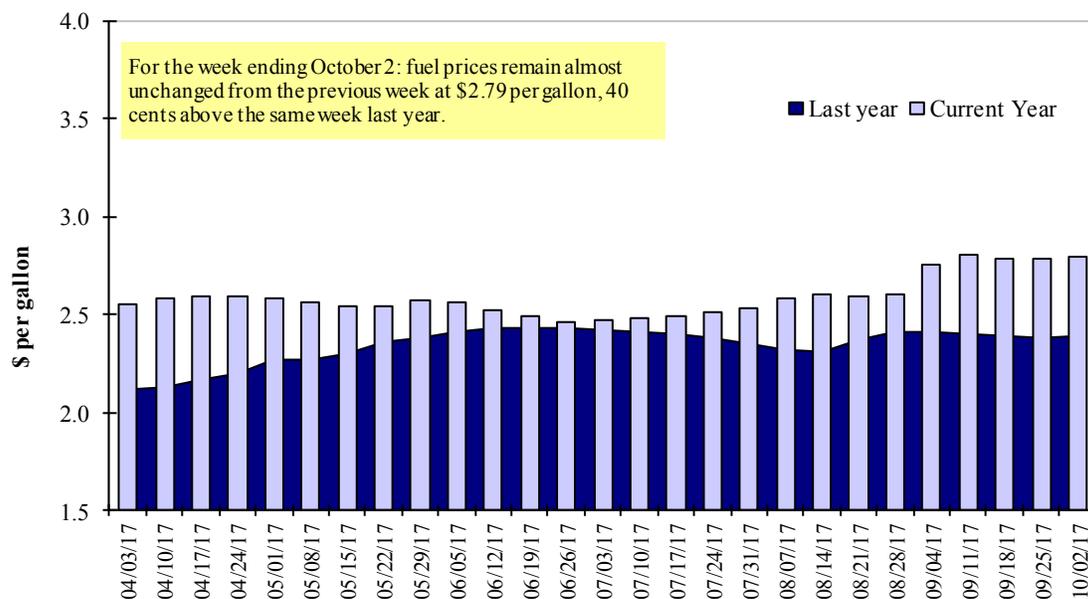
<sup>1</sup>Diesel fuel prices include all taxes. Prices represent an average of all types of diesel fuel.

<sup>2</sup>Same as North Central <sup>3</sup>Same as South Central

Source: Energy Information Administration/U.S. Department of Energy ([www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov))

Figure 13

## Weekly Diesel Fuel Prices, U.S. Average



Source: Retail On-Highway Diesel Prices, Energy Information Administration, Dept. of Energy

# Grain Exports

Table 12

## U.S. Export Balances and Cumulative Exports (1,000 metric tons)

For the week ending	Wheat						Corn	Soybeans	Total
	HRW	SRW	HRS	SWW	DUR	All wheat			
<b>Export Balances<sup>1</sup></b>									
9/21/2017	1,451	543	1,383	1,377	102	4,856	9,204	19,233	33,293
This week year ago	2,115	457	1,460	979	67	5,078	14,501	23,701	43,280
<b>Cumulative exports-marketing year<sup>2</sup></b>									
2017/18 YTD	3,614	789	2,268	1,842	150	8,663	2,146	3,082	13,890
2016/17 YTD	3,874	768	2,805	1,381	135	8,962	4,042	2,413	15,417
YTD 2017/18 as % of 2016/17	93	103	81	133	111	97	53	128	90
Last 4 wks as % of same period 2016/17	75	121	94	134	158	97	66	71	72
2016/17 Total	11,096	2,285	7,923	4,254	484	26,042	41,864	51,156	119,062
2015/16 Total	5,538	3,057	6,285	3,551	670	19,101	45,564	49,821	114,486

<sup>1</sup> Current unshipped (outstanding) export sales to date

<sup>2</sup> Shipped export sales to date; new marketing year now in effect for wheat, corn, and soybeans

Note: YTD = year-to-date. Marketing Year: wheat = 6/01-5/31, corn & soybeans = 9/01-8/31

Source: Foreign Agricultural Service/USDA ([www.fas.usda.gov](http://www.fas.usda.gov))

Table 13

## Top 5 Importers<sup>1</sup> of U.S. Corn

For the week ending 9/21/2017			% change current MY from last MY	Exports <sup>3</sup> 3-year avg 2014-2016 - 1,000 mt -
	2017/18 Current MY	2016/17 Last MY		
Mexico	5,247	4,926	7	12,297
Japan	1,335	2,432	(45)	11,450
Korea	75	1,042	(93)	4,494
Colombia	773	1,045	(26)	4,179
Peru	603	561	7	2,693
<b>Top 5 Importers</b>	<b>8,032</b>	<b>10,006</b>	<b>(20)</b>	<b>35,113</b>
<b>Total US corn export sales</b>	<b>11,350</b>	<b>18,543</b>	<b>(39)</b>	<b>49,308</b>
% of Projected	24%	32%		
Change from prior week <sup>2</sup>	<b>320</b>	<b>575</b>		
<b>Top 5 importers' share of U.S. corn export sales</b>	71%	54%		71%
<b>USDA forecast, Septemberr 2017</b>	<b>47,074</b>	<b>58,346</b>	<b>(19)</b>	
<b>Corn Use for Ethanol USDA forecast, September 2017</b>	<b>139,065</b>	<b>138,049</b>	<b>1</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Based on FAS Marketing Year Ranking Reports for 2015/16 - [www.fas.usda.gov](http://www.fas.usda.gov); Marketing year (MY) = Sep 1 - Aug 31.

<sup>2</sup> Cumulative Exports (shipped) + Outstanding Sales (unshipped), FAS Weekly Export Sales Report, or Export Sales Query-- <http://www.fas.usda.gov/esquery/>. Total commitments change (net sales) from prior week could include revisions from previous week's outstanding sales or accumulated sales.

<sup>3</sup> FAS Marketing Year Ranking Reports - <http://apps.fas.usda.gov/export-sales/myrkaug.htm>; 3-yr average

Table 14

**Top 5 Importers<sup>1</sup> of U.S. Soybeans**

For the week ending 9/21/2017	Commitments <sup>2</sup>		% change current MY from last MY	Exports <sup>3</sup> 3-yr avg. 2014-2016
	2017/18 Current MY	2016/17 Last MY		
	- 1,000 mt -			- 1,000 mt -
China	10,058	11,140	(10)	31,881
Mexico	1,253	1,141	10	3,452
Indonesia	469	330	42	1,987
Japan	603	648	(7)	2,067
Netherlands	0	0	0	2,098
<b>Top 5 importers</b>	<b>12,382</b>	<b>13,258</b>	<b>(7)</b>	<b>41,486</b>
<b>Total US soybean export sales</b>	<b>22,315</b>	<b>26,113</b>	<b>(15)</b>	<b>52,919</b>
% of Projected	37%	44%		
Change from prior week <sup>2</sup>	<b>2,983</b>	<b>1,693</b>		
<b>Top 5 importers' share of U.S. soybean export sales</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>51%</b>		<b>78%</b>
<b>USDA forecast, September 2017</b>	<b>60,627</b>	<b>59,128</b>	<b>103</b>	

(n) indicates negative number.

<sup>1</sup> Based on FAS Marketing Year Ranking Reports for 2015/16 - www.fas.usda.gov; Marketing year (MY) = Sep 1 - Aug 31.<sup>2</sup> Cumulative Exports (shipped) + Outstanding Sales (unshipped), FAS Weekly Export Sales Report, or Export Sales Query--  
http://www.fas.usda.gov/esrquery/. The total commitments change (net sales) from prior week could include revisions from previous week's  
outstanding sales and/or accumulated sales<sup>3</sup> FAS Marketing Year Final Reports - www.fas.usda.gov/export-sales/myfi\_rpt.htm. (Carry over plus Accumulated Exports)

Table 15

**Top 10 Importers<sup>1</sup> of All U.S. Wheat**

For the week ending 9/21/2017	Total Commitments <sup>2</sup>		% change current MY from last MY	Exports <sup>3</sup> 3-yr avg 2014-2016
	2017/18 Current MY	2016/17 Last MY		
	- 1,000 mt -			- 1,000 mt -
Japan	1,285	1,179	9	2,620
Mexico	1,686	1,399	21	2,743
Philippines	1,654	1,486	11	2,395
Brazil	95	896	(89)	862
Nigeria	693	637	9	1,254
Korea	1,028	727	41	1,104
China	532	495	8	1,623
Taiwan	622	463	34	768
Indonesia	611	458	34	726
Colombia	370	424	(13)	635
<b>Top 10 importers</b>	<b>8,576</b>	<b>8,164</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14,729</b>
<b>Total US wheat export sales</b>	<b>13,519</b>	<b>14,041</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>22,804</b>
% of Projected	51%	49%		
Change from prior week <sup>2</sup>	<b>436</b>	<b>571</b>		
<b>Top 10 importers' share of U.S. wheat export sales</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>58%</b>		<b>65%</b>
<b>USDA forecast, September 2017</b>	<b>26,567</b>	<b>28,747</b>	<b>(8)</b>	

(n) indicates negative number.

<sup>1</sup> Based on FAS Marketing Year Ranking Reports for 2015/16 - www.fas.usda.gov; Marketing year = Jun 1 - May 31.<sup>2</sup> Cumulative Exports (shipped) + Outstanding Sales (unshipped), FAS Weekly Export Sales Report, or Export Sales Query--  
http://www.fas.usda.gov/esrquery/. Total commitments change (net sales) from prior week could include revisions from the previous  
outstanding and/or accumulated sales<sup>3</sup> FAS Marketing Year Final Reports - www.fas.usda.gov/export-sales/myfi\_rpt.htm.

Table 16

## Grain Inspections for Export by U.S. Port Region (1,000 metric tons)

Port Regions	For the Week Ending 09/28/17	Previous Week <sup>1</sup>	Current Week as % of Previous	2017 YTD	2016 YTD	2017 YTD as % of 2016 YTD	Last 4-weeks as % of:		2016 Total
							Last Year	Prior 3-yr. avg.	
<b>Pacific Northwest</b>									
Wheat	500	185	270	12,102	9,865	123	95	98	12,325
Corn	122	59	206	10,169	10,312	99	16	30	12,009
Soybeans	0	69	0	5,690	5,543	103	n/a	572	14,447
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>27,961</b>	<b>25,720</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>38,782</b>
<b>Mississippi Gulf</b>									
Wheat	76	89	86	3,594	2,862	126	110	80	3,480
Corn	404	440	92	24,154	24,412	99	60	77	31,420
Soybeans	840	874	96	18,817	18,427	102	130	161	35,278
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,320</b>	<b>1,402</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>46,565</b>	<b>45,702</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>70,178</b>
<b>Texas Gulf</b>									
Wheat	135	209	65	5,295	4,322	123	52	85	6,019
Corn	62	10	597	653	1,389	47	32	61	1,669
Soybeans	14	0	n/a	14	92	15	n/a	572	1,105
<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>5,961</b>	<b>5,802</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>8,792</b>
<b>Interior</b>									
Wheat	17	23	73	1,439	1,146	126	51	64	1,543
Corn	153	226	68	6,357	5,428	117	122	127	7,197
Soybeans	75	67	111	3,608	2,905	124	174	184	4,577
<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>11,404</b>	<b>9,479</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>13,317</b>
<b>Great Lakes</b>									
Wheat	0	22	0	516	801	64	36	44	1,186
Corn	0	0	n/a	173	452	38	51	61	584
Soybeans	0	21	0	342	159	214	n/a	n/a	910
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>1,412</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>2,681</b>
<b>Atlantic</b>									
Wheat	0	0	n/a	44	201	22	132	5	315
Corn	0	5	0	14	138	10	10	10	294
Soybeans	13	60	22	1,082	1,096	99	147	331	2,269
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1,141</b>	<b>1,434</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>2,878</b>
<b>U.S. total from ports<sup>2</sup></b>									
Wheat	728	528	138	22,990	19,197	120	75	85	24,867
Corn	742	740	100	41,520	42,130	99	52	73	53,173
Soybeans	941	1,091	86	29,552	28,222	105	124	164	58,587
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,411</b>	<b>2,358</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>94,061</b>	<b>89,549</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>136,627</b>

<sup>1</sup> Data includes revisions from prior weeks; some regional totals may not add exactly due to rounding.

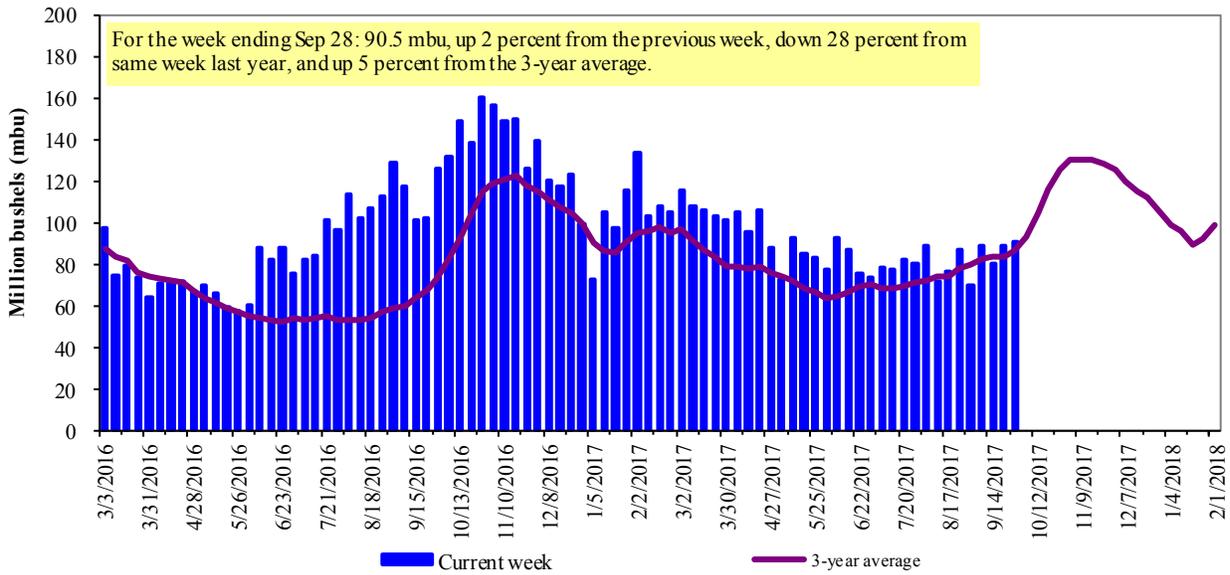
Source: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration/USDA ([www.gipsa.usda.gov](http://www.gipsa.usda.gov)); YTD= year-to-date; n/a = not applicable

<sup>2</sup> Total only includes regions shown above.

The United States exports approximately one-quarter of the grain it produces. On average, this includes nearly 45 percent of U.S.-grown wheat, 35 percent of U.S.-grown soybeans, and 20 percent of the U.S.-grown corn. Approximately 58 percent of the U.S. export grain shipments departed through the U.S. Gulf region in 2016.

Figure 14

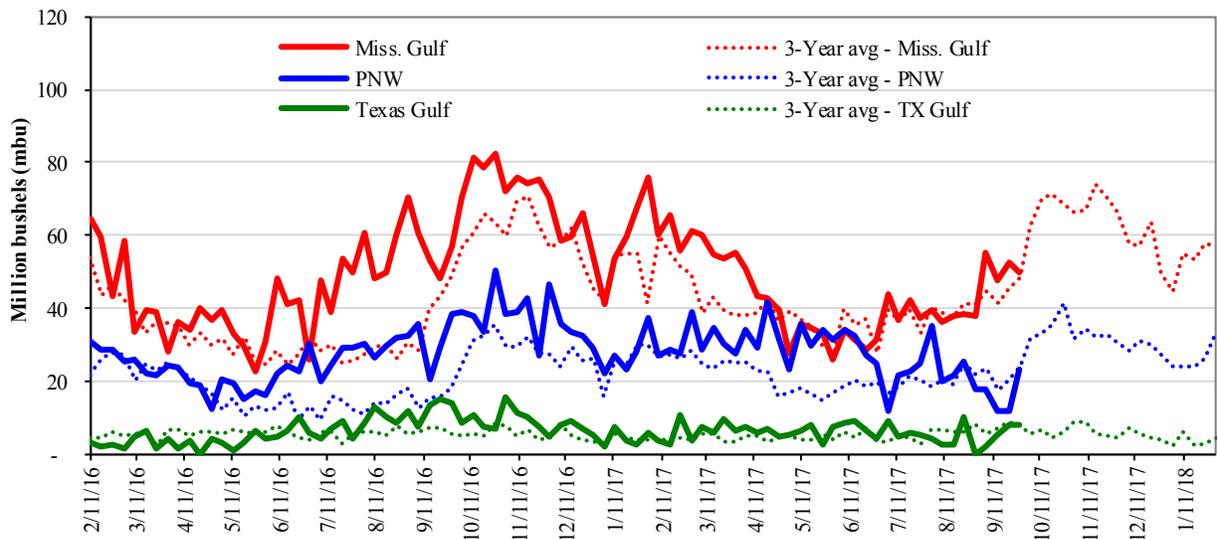
**U.S. grain inspected for export (wheat, corn, and soybeans)**



Source: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration/USDA (www.gipsa.usda.gov)  
 Note: 3-year average consists of 4-week running average

Figure 15

**U.S. Grain Inspections: U.S. Gulf and PNW<sup>1</sup> (wheat, corn, and soybeans)**



<u>Week ending 09/28/17 inspections (mbu):</u>	<u>Percent change from:</u>	<u>MS Gulf</u>	<u>TX Gulf</u>	<u>U.S. Gulf</u>	<u>PNW</u>
Mississippi Gulf: 49.6	Last Week:	down 6	down 2	down 5	up 98
PNW: 23.2	Last Year (same week):	down 13	down 43	down 19	down 40
Texas Gulf: 7.9	3-yr avg. (4-wk. mov. Avg):	up 10	up 10	up 10	up 9

Source: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration/USDA (www.gipsa.usda.gov)  
<sup>1</sup>The 3-year average is based on a 4-week running average

# Ocean Transportation

Table 17

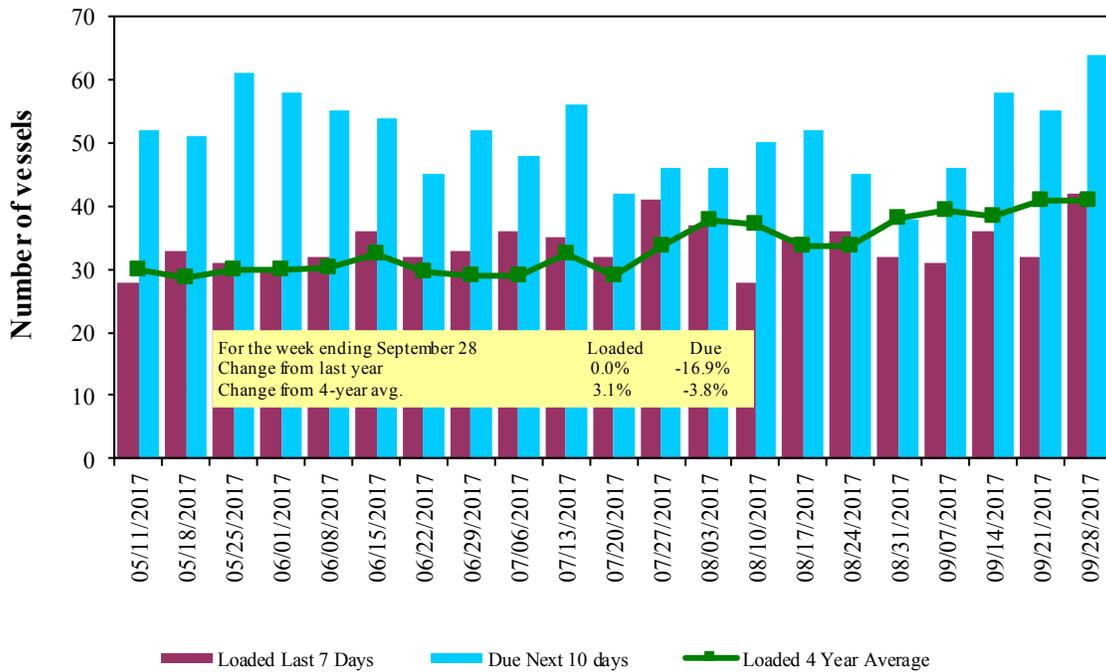
**Weekly Port Region Grain Ocean Vessel Activity (number of vessels)**

Date	Gulf			Pacific Northwest	Vancouver B.C.
	In port	Loaded 7-days	Due next 10-days	In port	In port
9/28/2017	46	42	64	15	n/a
9/21/2017	52	32	55	11	n/a
2016 range	(21..62)	(27..55)	(40..87)	(6..27)	n/a
2016 avg.	43	40	62	15	n/a

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Figure 16

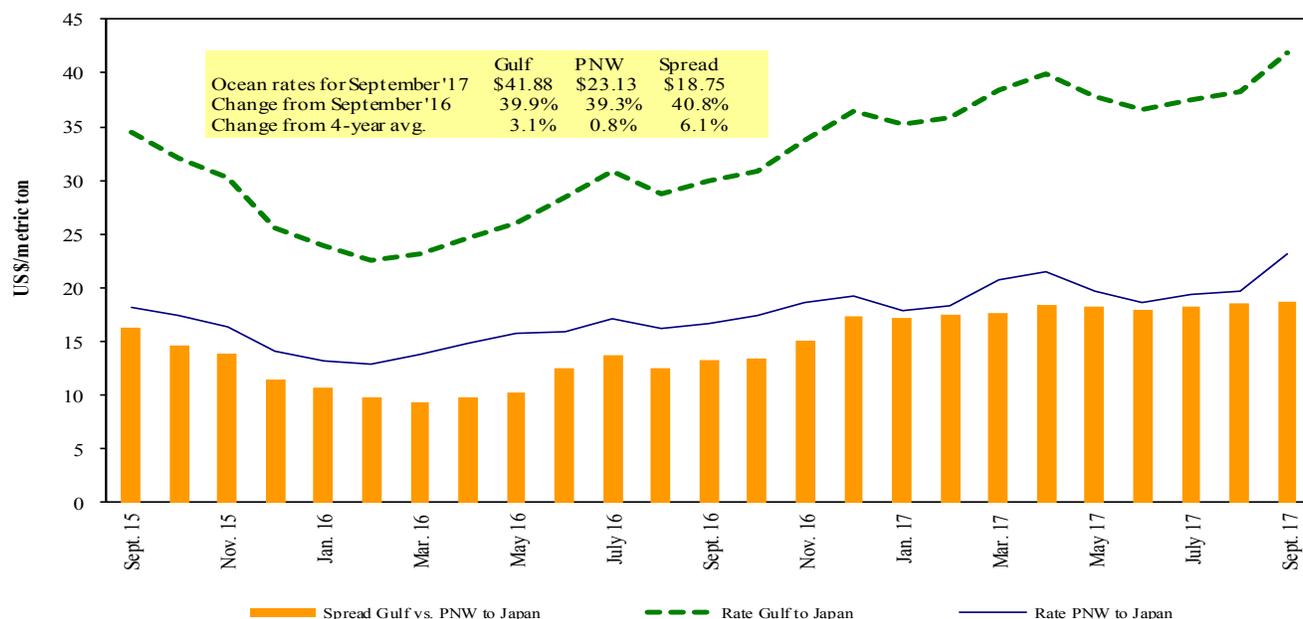
**U.S. Gulf Vessel Loading Activity**



Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA  
 1U.S. Gulf includes Mississippi, Texas, and East Gulf

Figure 17

**Grain Vessel Rates, U.S. to Japan**



Data Source: O'Neil Commodity Consulting

Table 18

**Ocean Freight Rates For Selected Shipments, Week Ending 09/30/2017**

Export region	Import region	Grain types	Loading date	Volume loads (metric tons)	Freight rate (US\$/metric ton)
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 15/30	66,000	42.50
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 10/20	66,000	41.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 1/10	66,000	41.25
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 1/10	66,000	41.50
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 1/10	66,000	38.75
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Sep 5/15	66,000	37.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Sep 5/15	66,000	39.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Sep 1/10	60,000	38.50
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Aug 25/30	66,000	37.75
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Aug 22/28	60,000	35.10
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Aug 10/20	60,000	34.50
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Aug 1/5	60,000	33.75
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Jul 20/30	60,000	32.95
U.S. Gulf	Djibouti	Wheat	Sep 15/25	30,000	54.50*
PNW	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 1/10	60,000	25.00
PNW	Bangladesh	Wheat	Sep 29/Oct 9	13,620	58.00*
Brazil	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 25/ Nov 10	60,000	32.50
Brazil	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 6/15	60,000	33.00
Brazil	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 1/10	60,000	332.75
Brazil	China	Heavy Grain	Sep 28/Oct 10	60,000	30.25
Brazil	China	Heavy Grain	Aug 1/10	60,000	27.25
Brazil	China	Heavy Grain	Jul 15/30	60,000	22.75
Brazil	Malaysia	Heavy Grain	Aug 15/24	65,000	23.75

Rates shown are per metric ton (2,204.62 lbs. = 1 metric ton), F.O.B., except where otherwise indicated; op = option

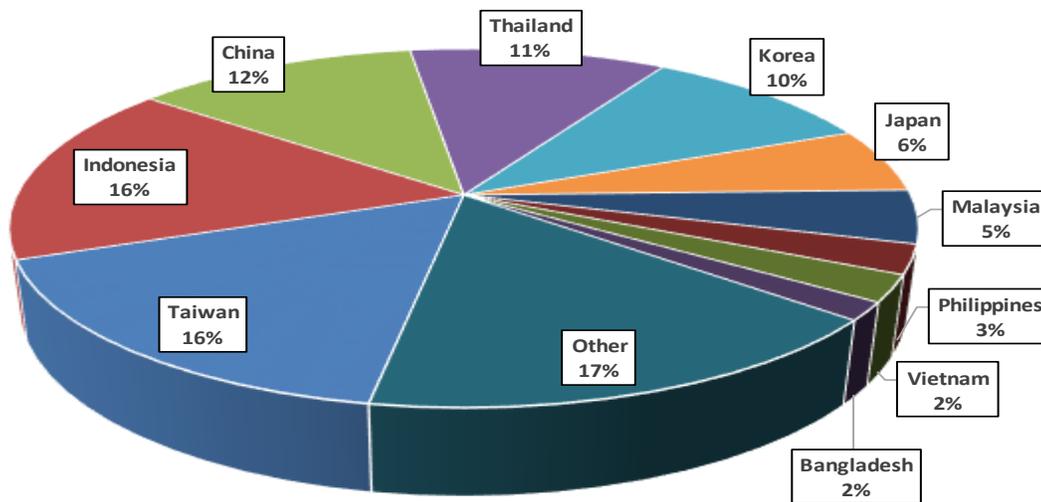
\*50 percent of food aid from the United States is required to be shipped on U.S.-flag vessels.

Source: Maritime Research Inc. (www.maritime-research.com)

In 2015, containers were used to transport 8 percent of total U.S. waterborne grain exports. Approximately 64 percent of U.S. waterborne grain exports in 2015 went to Asia, of which 12 percent were moved in containers. Approximately 94 percent of U.S. waterborne containerized grain exports were destined for Asia.

Figure 18

**Top 10 Destination Markets for U.S. Containerized Grain Exports, January-July 2017**

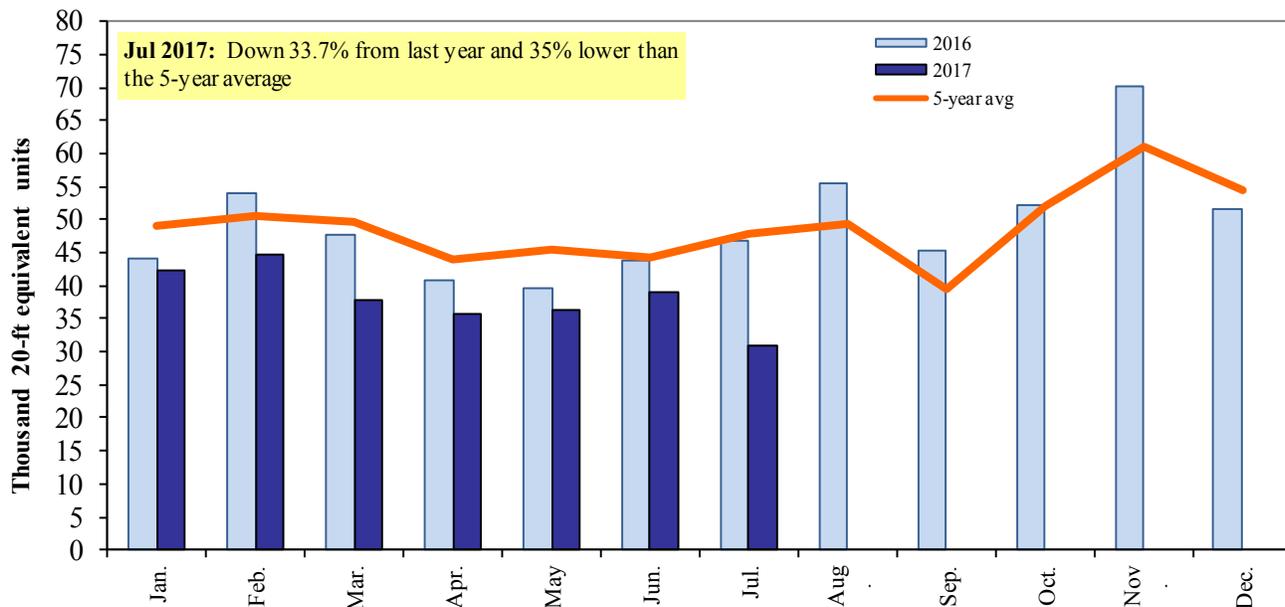


Source: USDA/Agricultural Marketing Service/Transportation Services Division analysis of Port Import Export Reporting Service (PIERS) data

Note: The following Harmonized Tariff Codes are used to calculate containerized grains movements: 100190, 100200, 100300, 100400, 100590, 100700, 110100, 230310, 110220, 110290, 120100, 230210, 230990, 230330, and 120810.

Figure 19

**Monthly Shipments of Containerized Grain to Asia**



Source: USDA/Agricultural Marketing Service/Transportation Services Division analysis of Port Import Export Reporting Service (PIERS) data.

Note: The following Harmonized Tariff Codes are used to calculate containerized grains movements: 100190, 100200, 100300, 100400, 100590, 100700, 110100, 110220, 110290, 120100, 120810, 230210, 230310, 230330, and 230990.

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