



Grain Transportation Report

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

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December 18, 2014

WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

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Wheat Inspections Rebound

For the week ending December 11, total inspections of wheat from all major export regions reached .381 million metric tons (mmt), up 45 percent from the past week, down 20 percent from last year, and 8 percent below the 3-year average. Shipments of wheat increased primarily to Asia and Latin America. Inspections of corn increased 4 percent from the previous week, but soybean inspections decreased 15 percent as shipments from the Pacific Northwest dropped 34 percent. **Total inspections** of grain (corn, wheat, soybeans) reached 2.8 mmt, down 7 percent from the past week, up 1 percent from last year, and 17 percent above the 3-year average.

Big Week for Grain by Rail

U.S. railroads originated 25,819 **carloads of grain** during the week ending December 6, up 28 percent from last week, 26 percent from last year, and 25 percent from the 3-year average. This is the most grain shipped by rail since 25,913 carloads of grain were shipped during the week ending January 8, 2011. Grain movements on BNSF Railway (BNSF)—13,080 carloads—accounted for more than half of the total movement. This is BNSF's highest weekly amount since the week ending September 4, 2010 at 13,284 and shows recent improvement over the rail service problems that affected shipments last year. In contrast, BNSF hauled only 8,068 carloads of grain during the same week last year.

Diesel Fuel Prices Fall In Response to Falling Oil Prices

During the week ending December 15, U.S. average diesel fuel prices decreased 12 cents from the previous week to \$3.42 per gallon—down 45 cents from the same week last year. Diesel fuel prices have not been this low since January 2011 and a fall in prices this steep has not occurred since November 2008. This dramatic decrease is in response to falling crude oil futures prices which fell below \$60 per barrel over the past week.

Above-Average Grain Barge Tonnages Continue as Portions of Upper Mississippi River Close for Winter

During the first half of December, downbound barge grain tonnages on the locking portion of the river system averaged 951,000 tons per week, 12 percent higher than the 5-year average. Year-to-date tonnages reached 33.7 million tons, 49 percent higher than last year and 13 percent above the 5-year average. Since early December, ice accumulations have stopped Mississippi River traffic above Dubuque, IA (near Lock 11). On December 15, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) closed Lock and Dam 13, Fulton, IA, for repairs, which are expected to be completed by March 4, 2015. On January 5, 2015, the Corps will close Lock and Dam 20, Canton, MO, for 2 months of repair work. During that time, much of the Upper Mississippi River will be closed, but traffic will continue, weather permitting, on the Illinois and Ohio Rivers.

Snapshots by Sector

Export Sales

During the week ending December 4, **unshipped balances** of wheat, corn, and soybeans totaled 36.5 mmt, 14 percent lower than the same time last year. **Corn** export sales reached 0.96 mmt, down 18 percent from the last week but up 9 percent from the previous 4-week average; **wheat**—442,300 mt, up 39 percent; and, **soybeans**—0.8 mmt, down 31 percent.

Rail

During the week ending December 11, average December shuttle **secondary railcar bids/offers per car** were \$138 below tariff, down \$100 from last week and \$2,088 lower than last year. There were no non-shuttle bids/offers.

Barge

During the week ending December 13 **barge grain movements** totaled 1,048,304 tons—22.8 percent higher than the previous week and 38 percent higher than the same period last year.

During the week ending December 13, 665 grain barges **moved down river**, up 20.7 percent from last week; 967 grain barges were **unloaded in New Orleans**, up 24.5 percent from the previous week.

Ocean

During the week ending December 11, 42 **ocean-going grain vessels** were loaded in the Gulf, 53.3 percent less than the same period last year. Eighty-eight vessels are expected to be loaded within the next 10 days, 27.5 percent more than the same period last year.

During the week ending December 12, the ocean freight rate for shipping bulk grain from the Gulf to Japan was \$41.50 per mt, down 2 percent from the previous week. The cost of shipping from the PNW to Japan was \$22.50 per mt, down 2 percent from the previous week.

Feature Article/Calendar

Soy Transportation Coalition Survey Shows Improved Rail Performance for 2014 Harvest

Two consecutive years of abundant crops have created transportation concerns evident throughout the country and have been the subject of numerous filings by USDA-AMS with the [Surface Transportation Board](#), and [related articles](#) throughout this AMS report since the 2013 fall harvest. In a region with limited local demand and no access to barge or transportation alternatives – North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Minnesota, and Nebraska, shippers of soybeans, corn, and wheat have experienced a particular financial hardship due to capacity and service issues on the railroads serving the region.

In addition to its annual railroad report card, the Soy Transportation Coalition (STC) is working with the University of Minnesota on a research project, “2014 Harvest: Attaching a Garden Hose to a Fire Hydrant.”¹ The research project aims to analyze the conditions of the rail service by surveying 42 grain elevators in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Nebraska every 2 weeks from early November through March of 2015. According to STC, the survey focuses on whether rail service is reliable or challenging, how rail service is impacting storage capacity at grain handling locations, and what corresponding effect, if any, will rail service present to farmer profitability in the surveyed regions. The STC also will be exploring potential harvest season exemptions—particularly for trucking—that, if instituted, could eliminate a portion of the pressure that may build due to rail service challenges.

With the report of the December 8 survey results, Mike Steenhoek, the STC executive director, wrote to STC stakeholders: “In reviewing the survey responses from the participating grain receiving locations, it becomes quickly evident that rail service for the 2014 harvest has thus far been a pleasant surprise. There are certainly opportunities for improvement moving forward, but railroads serving this particular area of the country should be commended for their performance up to this point.”² In recent weeks, the secondary railcar market rates have dropped significantly, confirming the general improvement in rail service (see GTR [Figure 4](#)).

In this second report of survey results, 70 percent of participating grain handling facilities reported cycle times for railroads were faster than a year ago, up 3 points from the previous report. Forty-eight percent recorded no rail orders as past due, up 15 points from the previous report. No respondents reported “much more” storage pressure than last year at their facilities; only 11 percent reported “more” pressure on storage; and 88 percent responded that storage pressure was “the same,” “less,” or “much less.” However, 60 percent of grain receiving facilities did claim to have experienced rail service delays and diminishing storage capacity in response to the 2014 harvest.

Based on the feedback from the survey participants, the overall favorable performance of the railroads in the analyzed area of the country can be attributed to the following:

- **An elongated harvest season:** Because the 2014 harvest occurred over a more elongated period of time, railroads were better able to adjust to the volumes produced by farmers. Historically, when the harvest occurs over a more condensed period, railroads are more challenged to accommodate the demand for service.
- **Railroads have responded to demand:** The railroads have responded to the increased demand with aggressive investment in locomotive power, track, and personnel.
- **Farmers storing grain:** Due to the recent retreat in commodity prices, farmers have elected to store more of their soybeans and grain. This has mitigated some pressure thus far on rail demand.
- **Favorable weather:** Although there has been some periods of significant snowfall and cold temperatures over the past couple of months, the weather overall has been favorable for transporting soybeans and grain in the surveyed areas. The STC analysis will continue to survey grain receiving locations into March of 2015 in order to monitor how railroads continue to serve agriculture if and when severe winter weather occurs.
- **More modest harvest volumes than anticipated:** Although the 2014 harvest will be regarded as large—perhaps even historic—several of the surveyed areas have reported more modest volumes than anticipated. Survey respondents mentioned “poorer crops” in certain areas and the harvest not “as expected.”

The third biweekly survey was sent to participants on December 5. The results will be made available on Monday, December 22. The STC will continue to monitor rail performance over the next few months and remains hopeful the improved rail service will continue, which should benefit farmer profitability.

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¹ <http://www.soytransportation.org/>

² <http://farmfutures.com/mdfm/Faress1/author/252/2014/12/Harvest%202014%20Rail%20Update%20Soy%20Transportation%20Coalition.pdf>

Grain Transportation Indicators

Table 1

Grain Transport Cost Indicators¹

Week ending	Truck	Rail		Barge	Ocean	
		Unit Train	Shuttle		Gulf	Pacific
12/17/14	230	245	207	275	186	160
12/10/14	237	257	212	279	190	163

¹Indicator: 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)

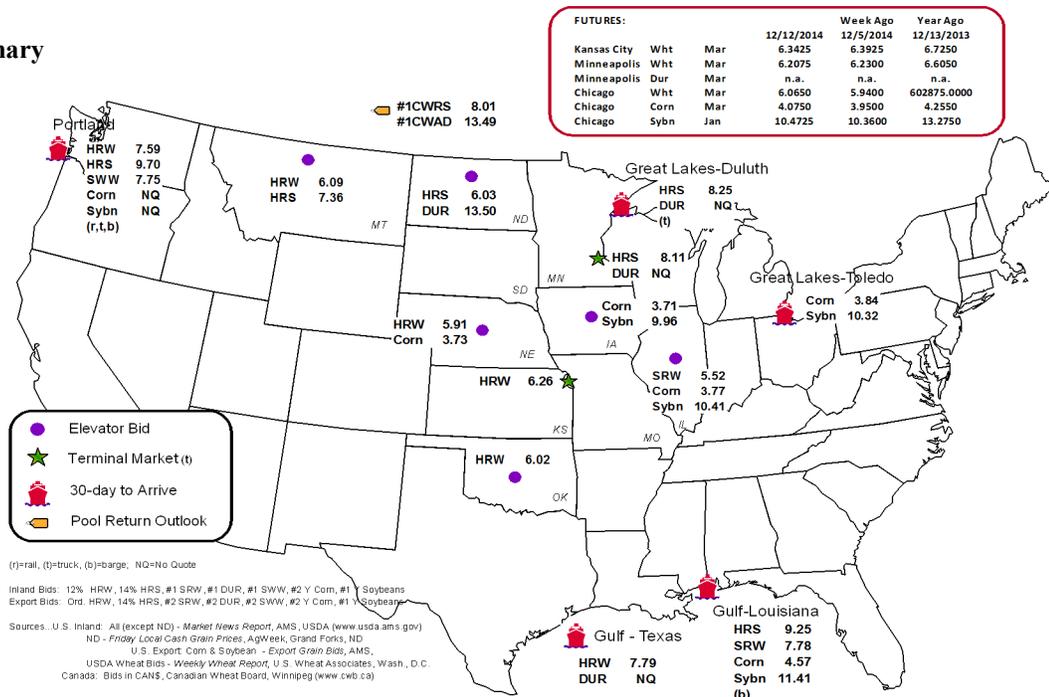
Commodity	Origin--Destination	12/12/2014	12/5/2014
Corn	IL--Gulf	-0.80	-0.89
Corn	NE--Gulf	-0.84	-1.02
Soybean	IA--Gulf	-1.45	-1.52
HRW	KS--Gulf	-1.53	-1.57
HRS	ND--Portland	-3.67	-3.98

Note: nq = no quote

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)¹

Week ending	Mississippi		Pacific	Atlantic &	Total	Week ending	Cross-Border
	Gulf	Texas Gulf	Northwest	East Gulf			Mexico ³
12/10/2014 ^p	2,013	976	6,127	1,242	10,358	12/4/2014	1,523
12/03/2014 ^r	1,040	1,426	6,065	843	9,374	11/29/2014	1,771
2014 YTD ^r	40,262	77,645	238,946	29,082	385,935	2014 YTD	93,933
2013 YTD ^r	28,952	69,546	158,173	23,557	280,228	2013 YTD	66,723
2014 YTD as % of 2013 YTD	139	112	151	123	138	% change YTD	141
Last 4 weeks as % of 2013 ²	91	104	109	78	101	Last 4wks % 2013	114
Last 4 weeks as % of 4-year avg. ²	146	104	140	101	130	Last 4wks % 4 yr	133
Total 2013	31,646	71,388	168,826	25,176	297,036	Total 2013	70,298
Total 2012	22,604	40,780	199,419	24,659	287,462	Total 2012	92,008

¹ Data is incomplete as it is voluntarily provided

² Compared with same 4-weeks in 2013 and prior 4-year average.

³ 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.

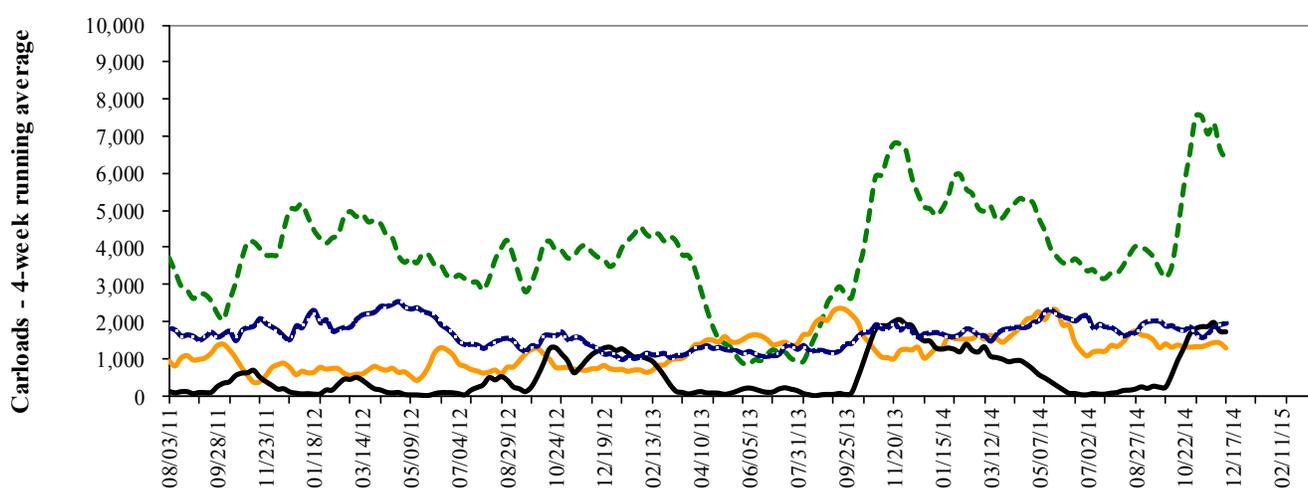
YTD = year-to-date; p = preliminary data; r = revised data; n/a = not available

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Railroads originate approximately 29 percent of U.S. grain shipments. Trends in these loadings are indicative of market conditions and expectations.

Figure 2

Rail Deliveries to Port



- Pacific Northwest: 4 wks. ending 12/10--up 9% from same period last year; up 40% from 4-year average
- Texas Gulf: 4 wks. ending 12/10--up 4% from same period last year; up 4% from 4-year average
- Miss. River: 4 wks. ending 12/10--down 9% from same period last year; up 46% from 4-year average
- Cross-border: 4 wks. ending 12/6-- up 14% from same period last year; up 33% from 4-year average

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

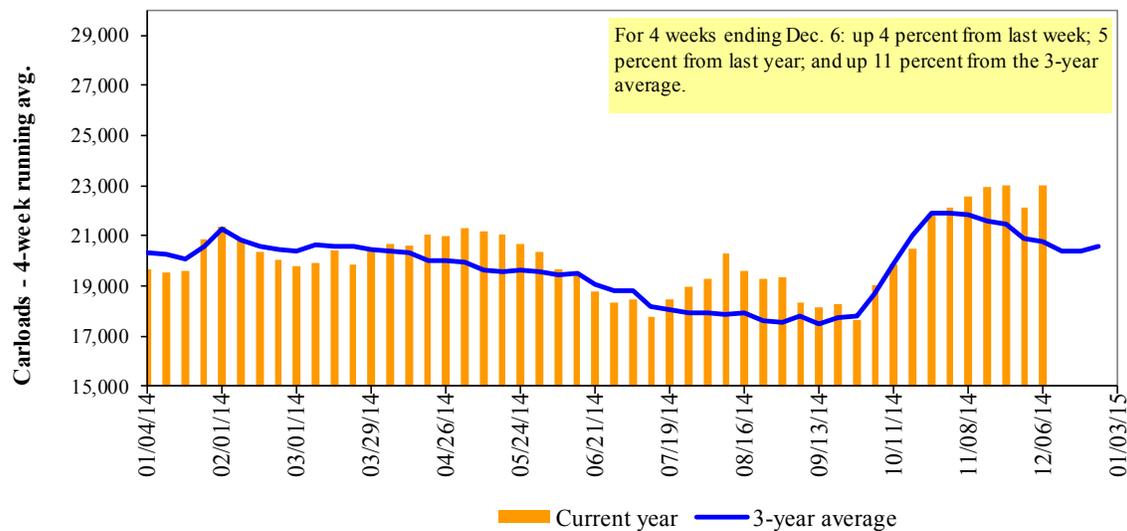
Table 4

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

Week ending	East		West			U.S. total	Canada	
	CSXT	NS	BNSF	KCS	UP		CN	CP
12/06/14	2,469	3,330	13,080	758	6,182	25,819	5,341	5,876
This week last year	2,679	3,640	8,068	1,028	5,145	20,560	4,841	5,327
2014 YTD	93,565	140,590	440,590	43,932	274,495	993,172	224,343	256,962
2013 YTD	80,051	128,579	429,162	32,428	205,978	876,198	178,832	258,981
2014 YTD as % of 2013 YTD	117	109	103	135	133	113	125	99
Last 4 weeks as % of 2013	87	93	119	95	97	104	108	93
Last 4 weeks as % of 3-yr avg. ¹	104	107	108	141	118	111	123	90
Total 2013	86,466	137,915	454,262	34,412	222,258	935,313	190,125	272,753

¹As a percent of the same period in 2009 and 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 Offerings¹ (\$/car)²

Week ending	Delivery period							
	Dec-14	Dec-13	Jan-15	Jan-14	Feb-15	Feb-14	Mar-15	Mar-14
BNSF ³								
COT grain units	no offer	n/a	129	no offer	124	no offer	79	no offer
COT grain single-car ⁵	no offer	n/a	76. .179	no offer	88. .157	no offer	58. .127	no offer
UP ⁴								
GCAS/Region 1	no offer	n/a	no offer	1	no offer	no bids	n/a	no bids
GCAS/Region 2	no offer	n/a	no offer	297	no offer	76	n/a	11

¹Auction offerings are for single-car and unit train shipments only.

²Average premium/discount to tariff, last auction

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

⁴UP - 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.

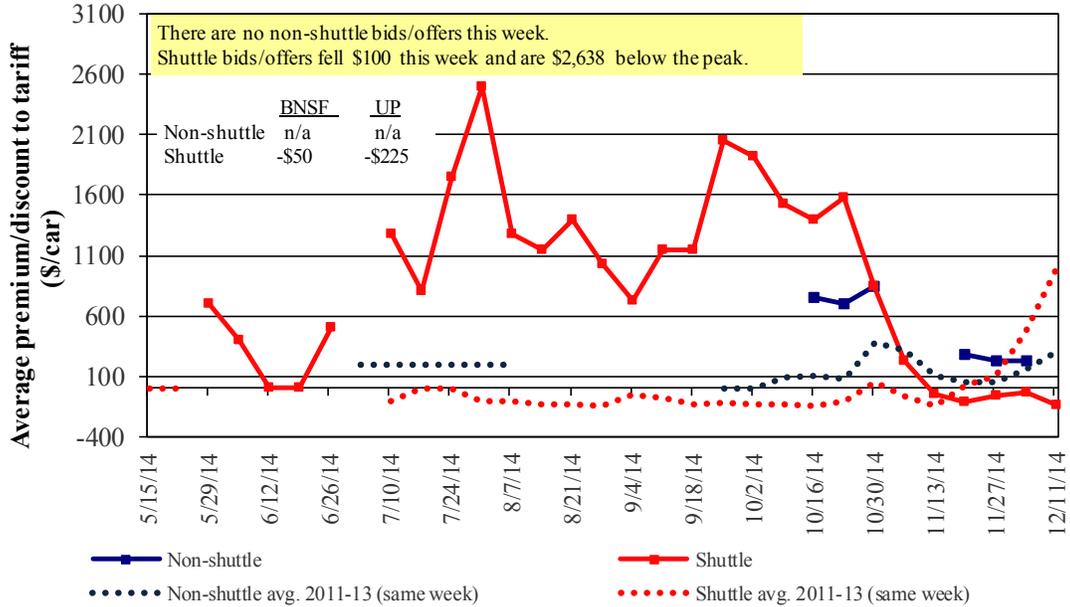
⁵Range is shown because average is not available. Not available = n/a.

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 December 2014, Secondary Market

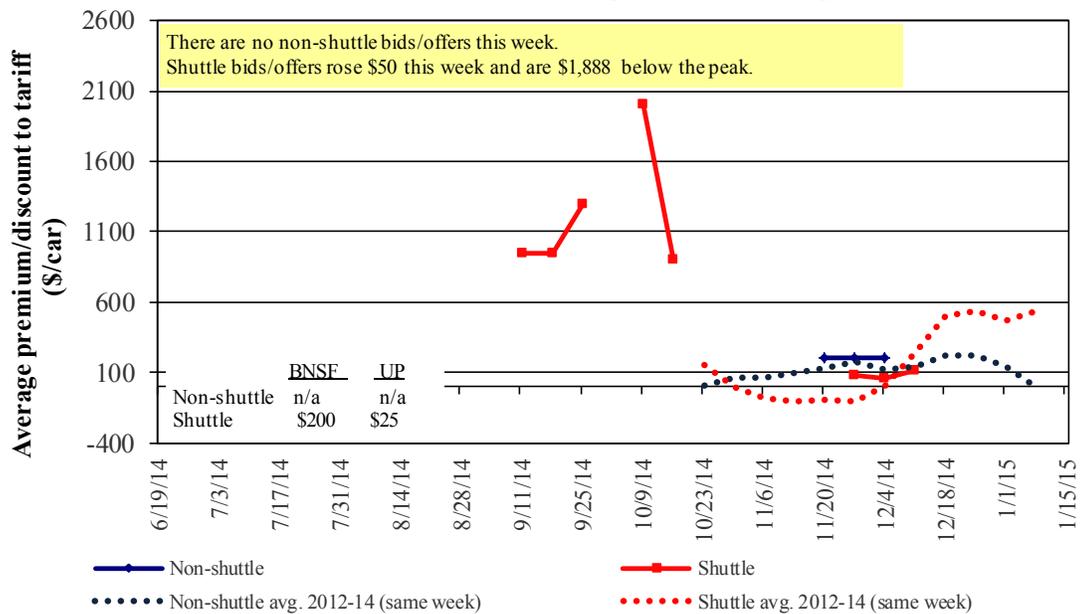


Non-shuttle bids include unit-train and single-car bids. n/a = not available.

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Figure 5

Bids/Offers for Railcars to be Delivered in January 2015, Secondary Market

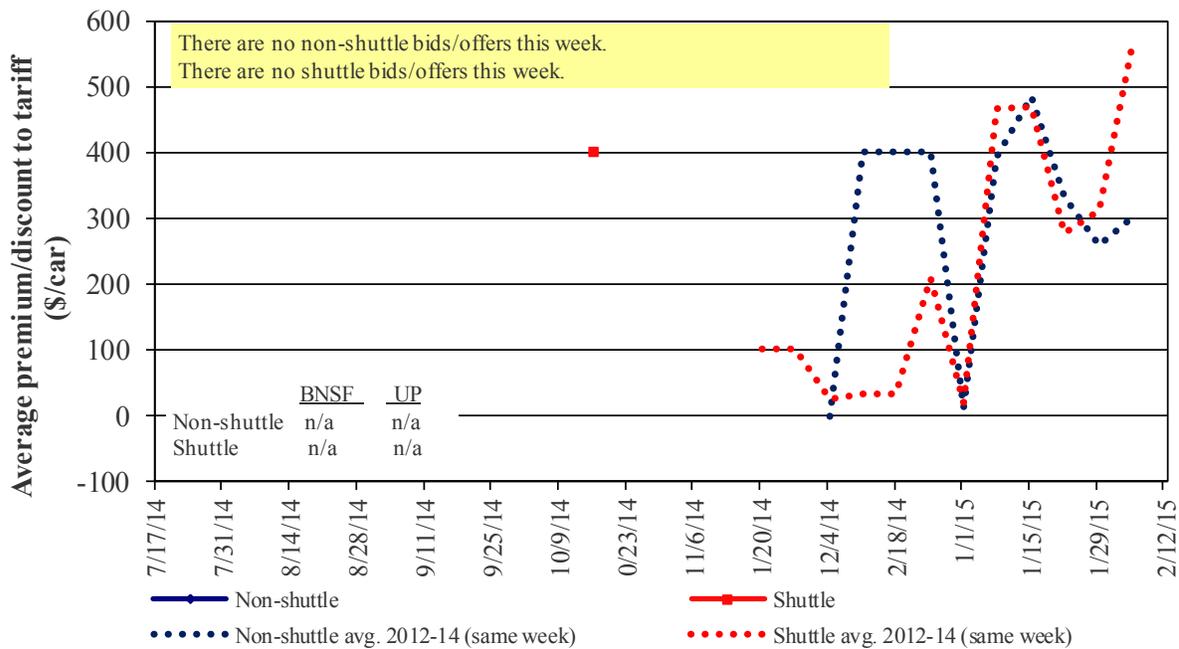


Non-shuttle bids include unit-train and single-car bids. n/a = not available.

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Figure 6

Bids/Offers for Railcars to be Delivered in February 2015, 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)¹

Week ending	Delivery period					
	Dec-14	Jan-15	Feb-15	Mar-15	Apr-15	May-15
Non-shuttle						
BNSF-GF	n/a	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 2013	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
UP-Pool	n/a	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 2013	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Shuttle²						
BNSF-GF	(50)	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Change from last week	(150)	100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Change from same week 2013	(2,800)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
UP-Pool	(225)	25	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Change from last week	(50)	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Change from same week 2013	(1,375)	(750)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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

²Shuttle bids are a new data series; prior to this we provided only non-shuttle rates.

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 Shipments¹

Effective date:		Origin region*	Destination region*	Tariff rate/car	Fuel surcharge per car	Tariff plus surcharge per:		Percent change Y/Y ³
12/1/2014	metric ton					bushe ^l ²		
Unit train								
Wheat	Wichita, KS	St. Louis, MO	\$3,387	\$162	\$35.24	\$0.96	5	
	Grand Forks, ND	Duluth-Superior, MN	\$3,596	\$89	\$36.60	\$1.00	0	
	Wichita, KS	Los Angeles, CA	\$6,244	\$459	\$66.56	\$1.81	-1	
	Wichita, KS	New Orleans, LA	\$4,026	\$285	\$42.81	\$1.17	4	
	Sioux Falls, SD	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$5,824	\$377	\$61.58	\$1.68	-1	
	Northwest KS	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$4,293	\$312	\$45.73	\$1.24	4	
	Amarillo, TX	Los Angeles, CA	\$4,492	\$434	\$48.92	\$1.33	3	
Corn	Champaign-Urbana, IL	New Orleans, LA	\$3,328	\$322	\$36.25	\$0.92	3	
	Toledo, OH	Raleigh, NC	\$4,875	\$372	\$52.11	\$1.32	3	
	Des Moines, IA	Davenport, IA	\$2,168	\$68	\$22.21	\$0.56	4	
	Indianapolis, IN	Atlanta, GA	\$4,211	\$280	\$44.59	\$1.13	3	
	Indianapolis, IN	Knoxville, TN	\$3,593	\$179	\$37.46	\$0.95	3	
	Des Moines, IA	Little Rock, AR	\$3,308	\$200	\$34.84	\$0.88	2	
	Des Moines, IA	Los Angeles, CA	\$5,365	\$583	\$59.07	\$1.50	1	
Soybeans	Minneapolis, MN	New Orleans, LA	\$3,839	\$350	\$41.60	\$1.13	5	
	Toledo, OH	Huntsville, AL	\$3,807	\$264	\$40.43	\$1.10	2	
	Indianapolis, IN	Raleigh, NC	\$4,946	\$375	\$52.84	\$1.44	3	
	Indianapolis, IN	Huntsville, AL	\$3,499	\$179	\$36.53	\$0.99	3	
	Champaign-Urbana, IL	New Orleans, LA	\$3,974	\$322	\$42.66	\$1.16	5	
Shuttle Train								
Wheat	Great Falls, MT	Portland, OR	\$3,678	\$264	\$39.15	\$1.07	-1	
	Wichita, KS	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$3,471	\$206	\$36.51	\$0.99	-9	
	Chicago, IL	Albany, NY	\$4,140	\$349	\$44.58	\$1.21	3	
	Grand Forks, ND	Portland, OR	\$5,159	\$456	\$55.76	\$1.52	-1	
	Grand Forks, ND	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$6,084	\$475	\$65.13	\$1.77	-1	
	Northwest KS	Portland, OR	\$5,260	\$512	\$57.32	\$1.56	3	
	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$5,000	\$555	\$55.17	\$1.40	-2	
Corn	Sioux Falls, SD	Tacoma, WA	\$4,960	\$509	\$54.30	\$1.38	-2	
	Champaign-Urbana, IL	New Orleans, LA	\$3,147	\$322	\$34.45	\$0.88	3	
	Lincoln, NE	Galveston-Houston, TX	\$3,510	\$296	\$37.80	\$0.96	-1	
	Des Moines, IA	Amarillo, TX	\$3,690	\$252	\$39.14	\$0.99	2	
	Minneapolis, MN	Tacoma, WA	\$5,000	\$551	\$55.12	\$1.40	-2	
	Council Bluffs, IA	Stockton, CA	\$4,400	\$570	\$49.35	\$1.25	-2	
	Sioux Falls, SD	Tacoma, WA	\$5,520	\$509	\$59.87	\$1.63	-1	
Soybeans	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$5,530	\$555	\$60.43	\$1.64	-1	
	Fargo, ND	Tacoma, WA	\$5,430	\$452	\$58.41	\$1.59	-1	
	Council Bluffs, IA	New Orleans, LA	\$4,425	\$371	\$47.63	\$1.30	4	
	Toledo, OH	Huntsville, AL	\$2,982	\$264	\$32.24	\$0.88	3	
	Grand Island, NE	Portland, OR	\$5,360	\$524	\$58.43	\$1.59	3	

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

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

³Percentage change year over year calculated using tariff rate plus fuel surcharge

Sources: www.bnsf.com, www.cpr.ca, www.csx.com, www.uprr.com

*Regional economic areas defined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

Table 8

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

Commodity	Origin state	Destination region	Tariff rate/car ¹	Fuel surcharge per car ²	Tariff plus surcharge per:		Percent change Y/Y ⁴
					metric ton ³	bushel ³	
Wheat	MT	Chihuahua, CI	\$6,760	\$482	\$74.00	\$2.01	5
	OK	Cuautitlan, EM	\$6,465	\$586	\$72.04	\$1.96	3
	KS	Guadalajara, JA	\$7,049	\$566	\$77.81	\$2.12	5
	TX	Salinas Victoria, NL	\$3,885	\$221	\$41.95	\$1.14	30
Corn	IA	Guadalajara, JA	\$8,049	\$666	\$89.04	\$2.26	0
	SD	Celaya, GJ	\$7,656	\$631	\$84.68	\$2.15	-1
	NE	Queretaro, QA	\$7,535	\$591	\$83.03	\$2.11	1
	SD	Salinas Victoria, NL	\$5,880	\$480	\$64.98	\$1.65	-1
	MO	Tlalnepantla, EM	\$6,887	\$575	\$76.24	\$1.93	0
	SD	Torreon, CU	\$6,722	\$529	\$74.08	\$1.88	-1
Soybeans	MO	Bojay (Tula), HG	\$8,111	\$562	\$88.61	\$2.41	2
	NE	Guadalajara, JA	\$8,572	\$642	\$94.14	\$2.56	0
	IA	El Castillo, JA	\$8,855	\$627	\$96.89	\$2.63	-1
	KS	Torreon, CU	\$6,989	\$398	\$75.48	\$2.05	1
Sorghum	TX	Guadalajara, JA	\$6,953	\$411	\$75.24	\$1.91	2
	NE	Celaya, GJ	\$7,287	\$573	\$80.31	\$2.04	-1
	KS	Queretaro, QA	\$6,795	\$360	\$73.10	\$1.86	-4
	NE	Salinas Victoria, NL	\$5,500	\$422	\$60.50	\$1.54	-3
	NE	Torreon, CU	\$6,318	\$470	\$69.36	\$1.76	-1

¹Rates 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.

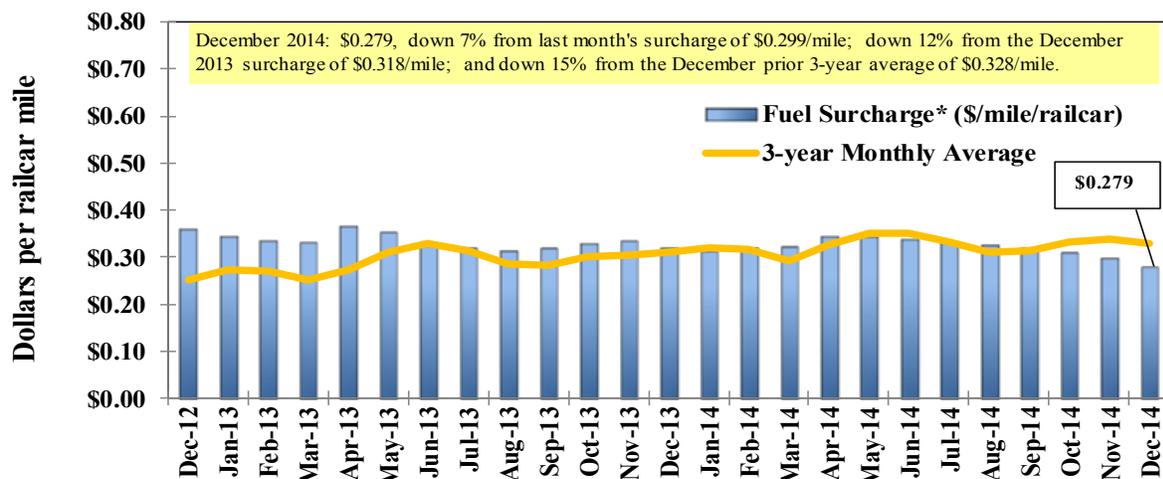
²Fuel surcharge adjusted to reflect the change in Ferrocarril Mexicano, S.A. de C.V railroad fuel surcharge policy as of 10/01/2009

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

⁴Percentage change year over year 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 Average¹

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

* Mileage-based fuel surcharges for March and April 2007 are estimated. Beginning January 2009, the Canadian Pacific fuel surcharge is computed by a monthly average of the bi-weekly fuel surcharge.

** BNSF strike price (diesel price when fuel surcharges begin) changed from \$1.25/gal. to \$2.50/gal starting March 1, 2011. As a result, the weighted average fuel surcharge for March 2011 was \$0.227/mile instead of \$0.331/mile.

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^{1,2}



¹Rate = percent of 1976 tariff benchmark index (1976 = 100 percent); ²4-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
Rate¹	12/16/2014	-	-	495	353	481	481	334
	12/9/2014	-	-	503	333	400	400	317
\$/ton	12/16/2014	-	-	22.97	14.08	22.56	19.43	10.49
	12/9/2014	-	-	23.34	13.29	18.76	16.16	9.95
Current week % change from the same week:								
	Last year	-	-	-14	-26	12	12	12
	3-year avg. ²	-	-	-3	-15	6	6	2
Rate¹	January	-	-	490	328	431	431	316
	March	-	424	420	319	386	386	265

¹Rate = percent of 1976 tariff benchmark index (1976 = 100 percent); ²4-week moving average; ton = 2,000 pounds;

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Figure 9

Benchmark tariff rates

Calculating barge rate per ton:

(Rate * 1976 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.

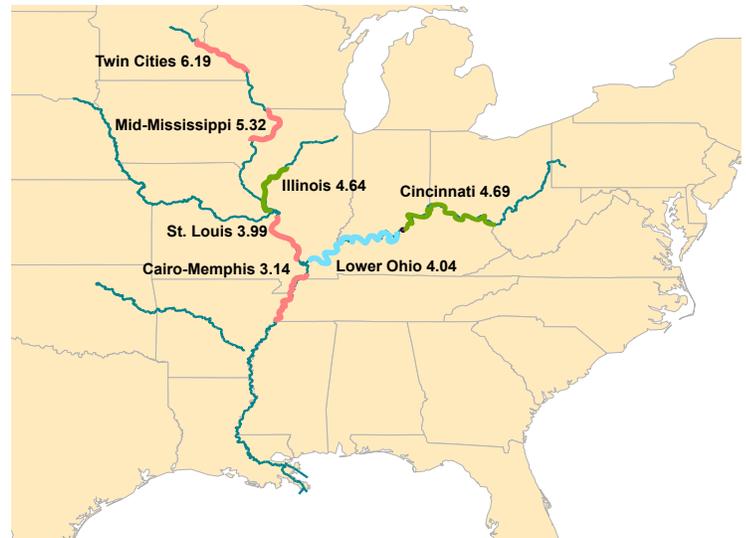
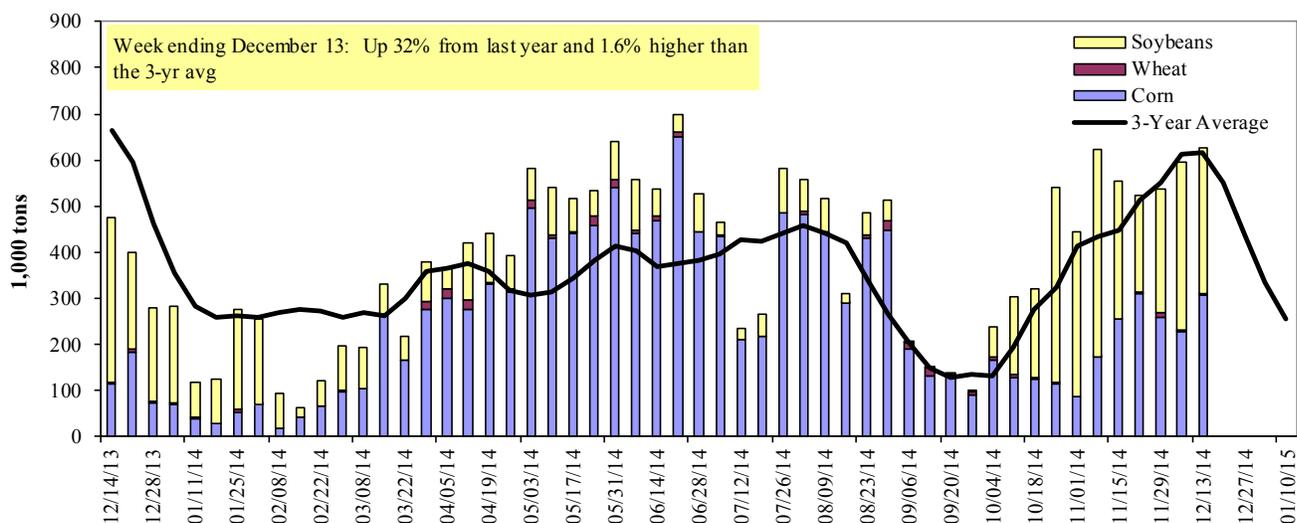


Figure 10

Barge Movements on the Mississippi River¹ (Locks 27 - Granite City, IL)



¹ 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)

Week ending 12/13/2014	Corn	Wheat	Soybeans	Other	Total
Mississippi River					
Rock Island, IL (L15)	18	0	3	0	21
Winfield, MO (L25)	97	0	178	13	287
Alton, IL (L26)	311	5	303	13	630
Granite City, IL (L27)	305	5	317	13	639
Illinois River (L8)	128	0	104	0	232
Ohio River (L52)	164	4	140	5	313
Arkansas River (L1)	0	10	87	0	96
Weekly total - 2014	470	18	543	18	1,048
Weekly total - 2013	225	19	514	1	760
2014 YTD ¹	20,144	2,153	11,089	240	33,628
2013 YTD	8,989	4,064	9,310	228	22,592
2014 as % of 2013 YTD	224	53	119	105	149
Last 4 weeks as % of 2013 ²	113	53	118	153	115
Total 2013	9,504	4,111	10,065	255	23,935

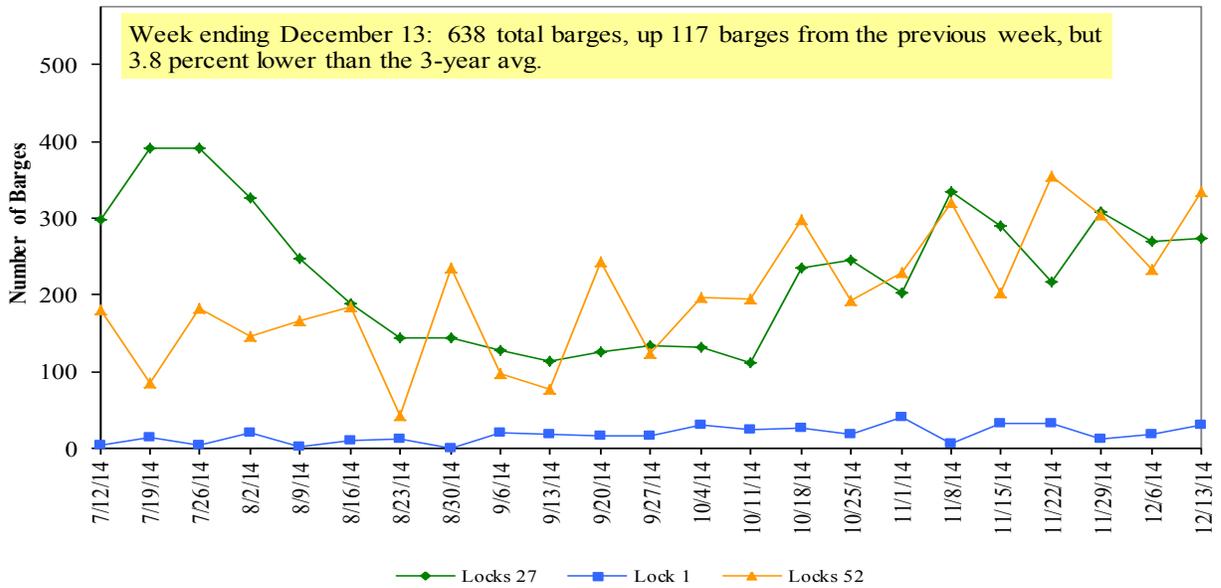
¹ Weekly total, YTD (year-to-date) and calendar year total includes Miss/27, Ohio/52, and Ark/1; "Other" refers to oats, barley, sorghum, and rye.

² As a percent of same period in 2013.

Note: Total may not add exactly, due to rounding

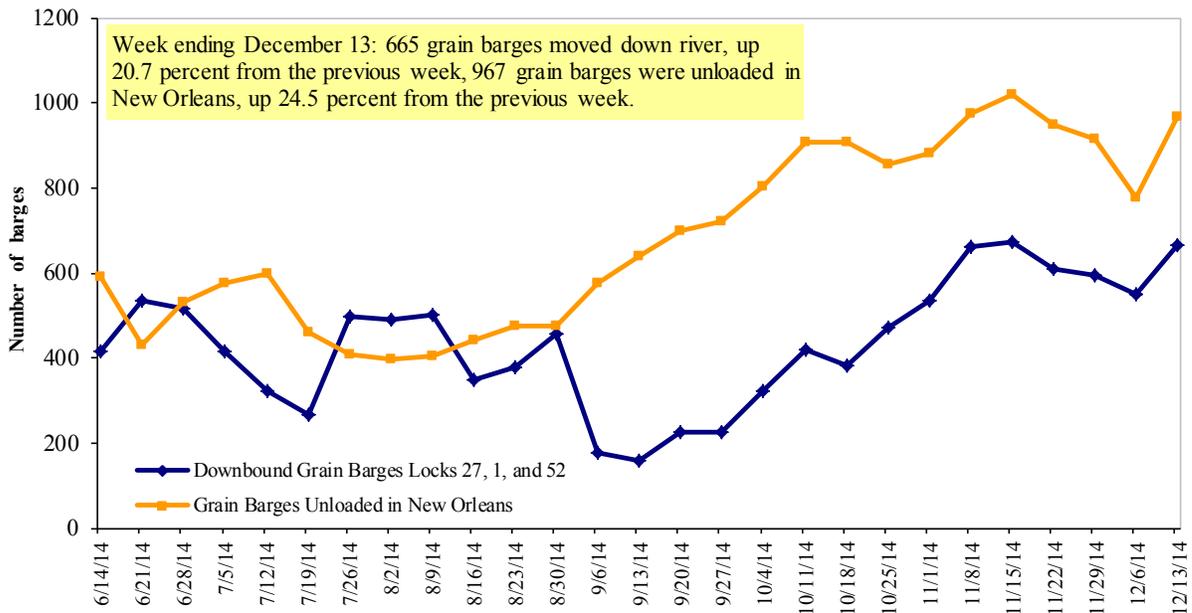
Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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 Prices¹, Week Ending 12/15/2014 (US \$/gallon)

Region	Location	Price	Change from	
			Week ago	Year ago
I	East Coast	3.385	-0.075	-0.530
	New England	3.467	-0.058	-0.597
	Central Atlantic	3.454	-0.085	-0.523
	Lower Atlantic	3.314	-0.072	-0.526
II	Midwest ²	3.473	-0.150	-0.379
III	Gulf Coast ³	3.328	-0.106	-0.438
IV	Rocky Mountain	3.504	-0.151	-0.348
V	West Coast	3.469	-0.124	-0.513
	West Coast less California	3.371	-0.148	-0.513
	California	3.550	-0.105	-0.516
Total	U.S.	3.419	-0.116	-0.452

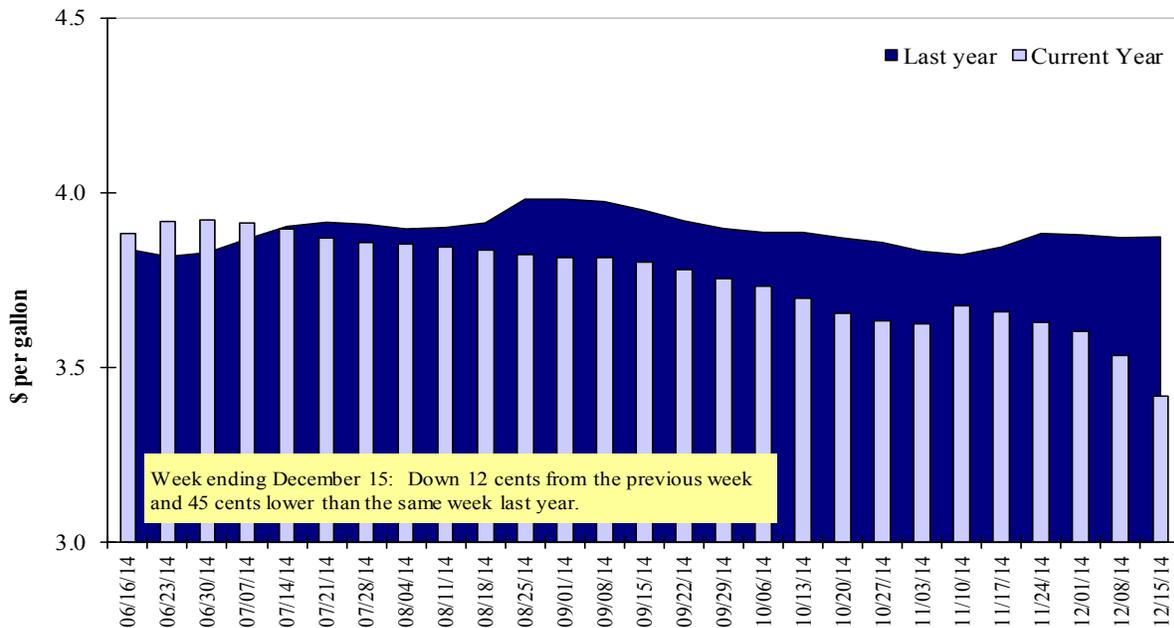
¹Diesel fuel prices include all taxes. Prices represent an average of all types of diesel fuel.

²Same as North Central ³Same as South Central

Source: Energy Information Administration/U.S. Department of Energy (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)

Week ending	Wheat						Corn	Soybeans	Total
	HRW	SRW	HRS	SWW	DUR	All wheat			
Export Balances¹									
12/4/2014	1,476	848	1,634	933	117	5,008	13,777	17,732	36,517
This week year ago	1,427	1,059	1,582	951	78	5,097	17,617	19,703	42,417
Cumulative exports-marketing year²									
2014/15 YTD	3,868	2,153	3,916	2,063	368	12,367	9,936	22,729	45,032
2013/14 YTD	7,086	5,427	2,980	2,154	234	17,881	8,055	18,923	44,859
YTD 2014/15 as % of 2013/14	55	40	131	96	157	69	123	120	100
Last 4 wks as % of same period 2013/14	103	83	101	98	167	98	75	100	90
2013/14 Total	11,465	7,307	6,338	4,367	486	29,963	46,868	44,478	121,309
2012/13 Total	10,019	5,039	5,825	4,619	591	26,093	17,980	36,220	80,293

¹ Current unshipped export sales to date

² Shipped export sales to date; new marketing year in effect for 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)

Table 13

Top 5 Importers¹ of U.S. Corn

Week ending 12/04/2014	Total Commitments ²		% change current MY from last MY	Exports ³ 3-year avg 2011-2013
	2014/15 Current MY	2013/14 Last MY		
	- 1,000 mt -			- 1,000 mt -
Japan	4,899	4,469	10	10,079
Mexico	5,900	7,336	(20)	8,145
Korea	799	771	4	2,965
Colombia	1,885	909	108	3,461
Taiwan	536	401	34	1,238
Top 5 Importers	14,020	13,885	1	25,887
Total US corn export sales	23,713	25,672	(8)	34,445
% of Projected	53%	53%		
Change from prior week	963	459		
Top 5 importers' share of U.S. corn export sales	59%	54%		75%
USDA forecast, December 2014	44,450	48,700	(9)	
Corn Use for Ethanol USDA forecast, December 2014	130,810	130,404	0.3	

(n) indicates negative number.

¹Based on FAS Marketing Year Ranking Reports - www.fas.usda.gov; Marketing year (MY) = Sep 1 - Aug 31.

²Cumulative Exports (shipped) + Outstanding Sales (unshipped), FAS Weekly Export Sales Report, or Export Sales Query--
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/esrquery/>

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

Table 14

Top 5 Importers¹ of U.S. Soybeans

Week Ending 12/04/2014	Total Commitments ²		% change current MY from last MY	Exports ³ 3-yr avg. 2011-13
	2014/15 Current MY	2013/14 Last MY		
	- 1,000 mt -			- 1,000 mt -
China	25,191	24,525	3	24,211
Mexico	1,812	1,626	11	2,971
Indonesia	828	902	(8)	1,895
Japan	1,005	960	5	1,750
Taiwan	1,025	869	18	1,055
Top 5 importers	29,861	28,880	3	31,882
Total US soybean export sales	40,461	38,626	5	39,169
% of Projected	84%	86%		
Change from prior week*	810	1,109		
Top 5 importers' share of U.S. soybean export sales	74%	75%		81%
USDA forecast, December 2014	47,900	44,820	7	

(n) indicates negative number.

¹Based on FAS Marketing Year Ranking Reports - www.fas.usda.gov; Marketing year (MY) = Sep 1 - Aug 31.²Cumulative Exports (shipped) + Outstanding Sales (unshipped), FAS Weekly Export Sales Report, or Export Sales Query--<http://www.fas.usda.gov/esrquery/>³FAS Marketing Year Final Reports - www.fas.usda.gov/export-sales/myfi_rpt.htm. (Carryover plus Accumulated Exports)

Table 15

Top 10 Importers¹ of All U.S. Wheat

Week Ending 12/04/2014	Total Commitments ²		% change current MY from last MY	Exports ³ 3-yr avg 2011-2013
	2014/15 Current MY	2013/14 Last MY		
	- 1,000 mt -			- 1,000 mt -
Japan	2,280	1,709	33	3,243
Mexico	1,877	2,193	(14)	3,066
Nigeria	1,692	1,949	(13)	2,960
Philippines	1,523	1,322	15	2,006
China	215	4,084	(95)	1,830
Brazil	1,456	3,281	(56)	1,617
Korea	1,022	946	8	1,552
Taiwan	697	656	6	969
Indonesia	398	545	(27)	813
Colombia	475	463	3	610
Top 10 importers	11,633	17,147	(32)	18,665
Total US wheat export sales	17,375	22,978	(24)	27,696
% of Projected	69%	72%		
Change from prior week*	442	372		
Top 10 importers' share of U.S. wheat export sales	67%	75%		67%
USDA forecast, December 2014	25,170	32,010	(21)	

(n) indicates negative number.

¹Based on FAS Marketing Year Ranking Reports - www.fas.usda.gov; Marketing year = Jun 1 - May 31.²Cumulative Exports (shipped) + Outstanding Sales (unshipped), FAS Weekly Export Sales Report, or Export Sales Query--<http://www.fas.usda.gov/esrquery/>³FAS 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	Week ending 12/11/14	Previous Week ¹	Current Week as % of Previous	2014 YTD ¹	2013 YTD ¹	2014 YTD as % of 2013 YTD	Last 4-weeks as % of		Total ¹ 2013
							2013	3-yr. avg.	
Pacific Northwest									
Wheat	233	141	166	11,781	11,042	107	128	106	11,571
Corn	41	31	130	7,611	2,624	290	15	22	2,967
Soybeans	493	750	66	11,342	8,598	132	199	252	9,079
Total	767	922	83	30,734	22,264	138	118	141	23,618
Mississippi Gulf									
Wheat	22	12	178	4,347	9,629	45	30	43	9,700
Corn	388	407	95	29,449	13,881	212	107	108	14,803
Soybeans	1,113	1,149	97	26,383	19,649	134	127	163	21,436
Total	1,524	1,568	97	60,179	43,159	139	115	138	45,939
Texas Gulf									
Wheat	29	52	55	5,986	8,813	68	41	49	9,028
Corn	33	0	n/a	580	223	260	117	113	255
Soybeans	32	51	62	786	907	87	125	173	907
Total	94	103	91	7,352	9,944	74	68	83	10,190
Interior									
Wheat	33	20	162	1,334	1,012	132	111	128	1,242
Corn	68	81	84	5,319	3,667	145	78	67	3,936
Soybeans	43	162	26	3,924	3,075	128	70	174	3,208
Total	143	262	55	10,576	7,754	136	154	109	8,386
Great Lakes									
Wheat	64	36	177	853	862	99	109	180	883
Corn	7	0	n/a	288	0	n/a	n/a	221	0
Soybeans	84	49	171	794	650	122	130	241	698
Total	155	85	182	1,935	1,512	128	126	217	1,581
Atlantic									
Wheat	0	1	n/a	547	644	85	n/a	7	644
Corn	0	0	n/a	816	234	349	3	3	242
Soybeans	116	59	197	1,823	1,453	125	113	143	1,650
Total	116	60	195	3,185	2,331	137	111	136	2,536
U.S. total from ports²									
Wheat	381	262	145	24,847	32,002	78	78	83	33,069
Corn	537	518	104	44,063	20,630	214	70	81	22,202
Soybeans	1,881	2,220	85	45,051	34,332	131	142	182	36,980
Total	2,799	3,000	93	113,961	86,964	131	111	134	92,251

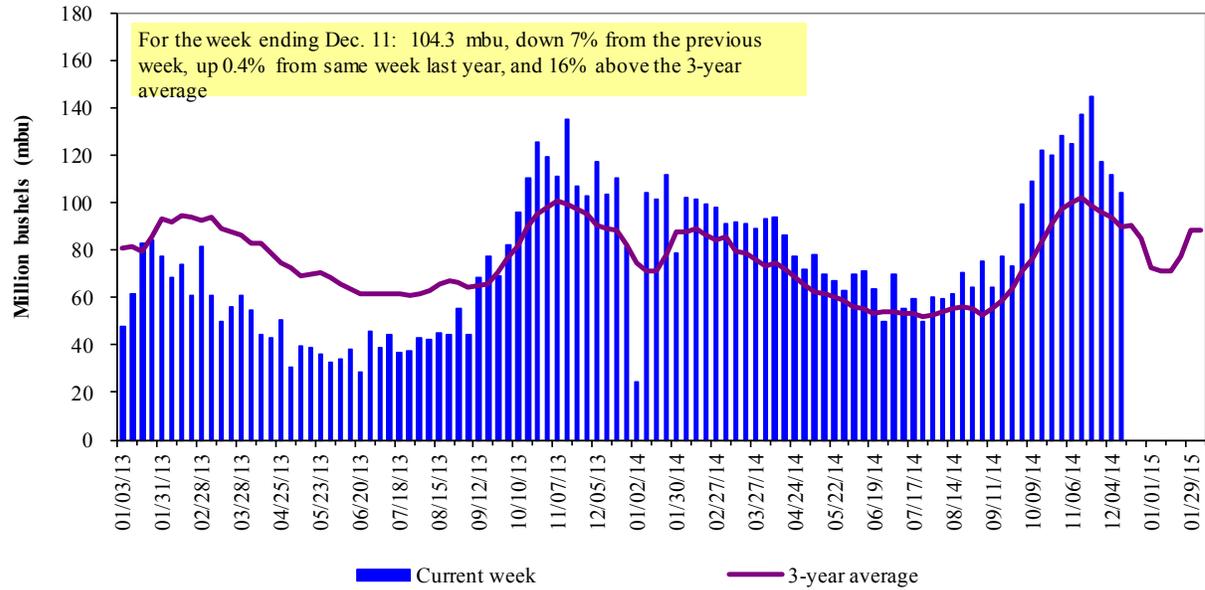
¹Data includes revisions from prior weeks; some regional totals may not add exactly due to rounding.

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

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 61 percent of the U.S. export grain shipments departed through the U.S. Gulf region in 2013.

Figure 14

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

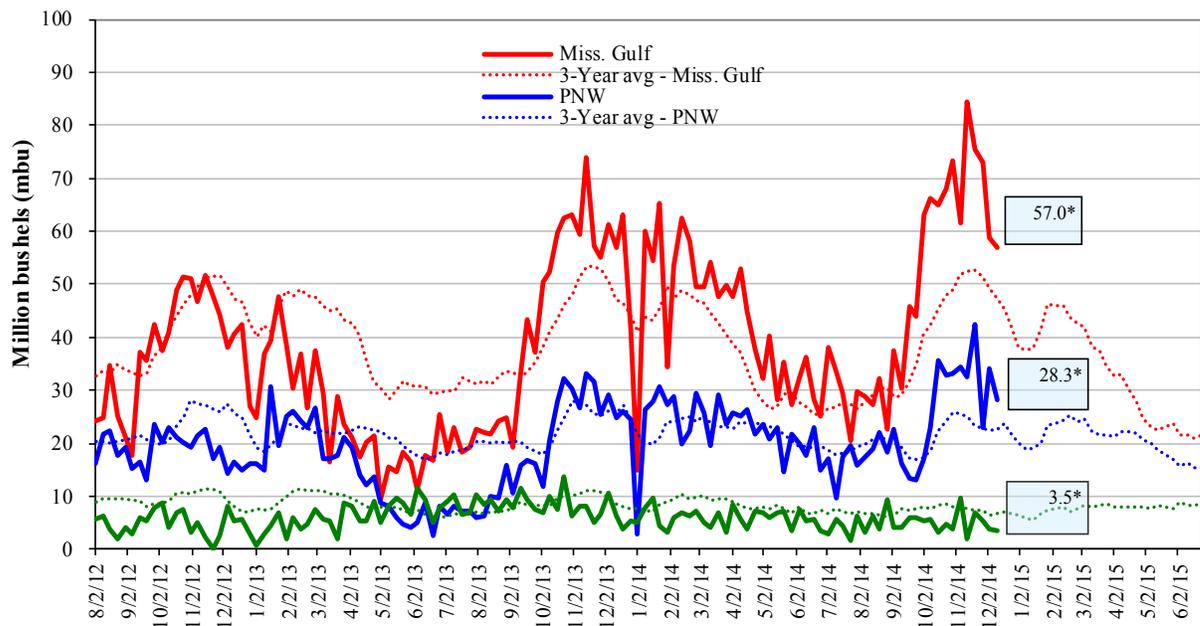


Source: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration/USDA (www.gipsa.usda.gov)

Note: 3-year average consists of 4-week running average

Figure 15

U.S. Grain Inspections: U.S. Gulf and PNW¹ (wheat, corn, and soybeans)



Source: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration/USDA (www.gipsa.usda.gov); *mbu, this week.

Dec 11: % change from:	MS Gulf	TX Gulf	U.S. Gulf	PNW
Last week	down 3	down 7	down 3	down 17
Last year (same week)	up 0.2	down 43	down 4	up 14
3-yr avg. (4-wk mov. avg.)	up 19	down 40	up 12	up 23

Ocean Transportation

Table 17

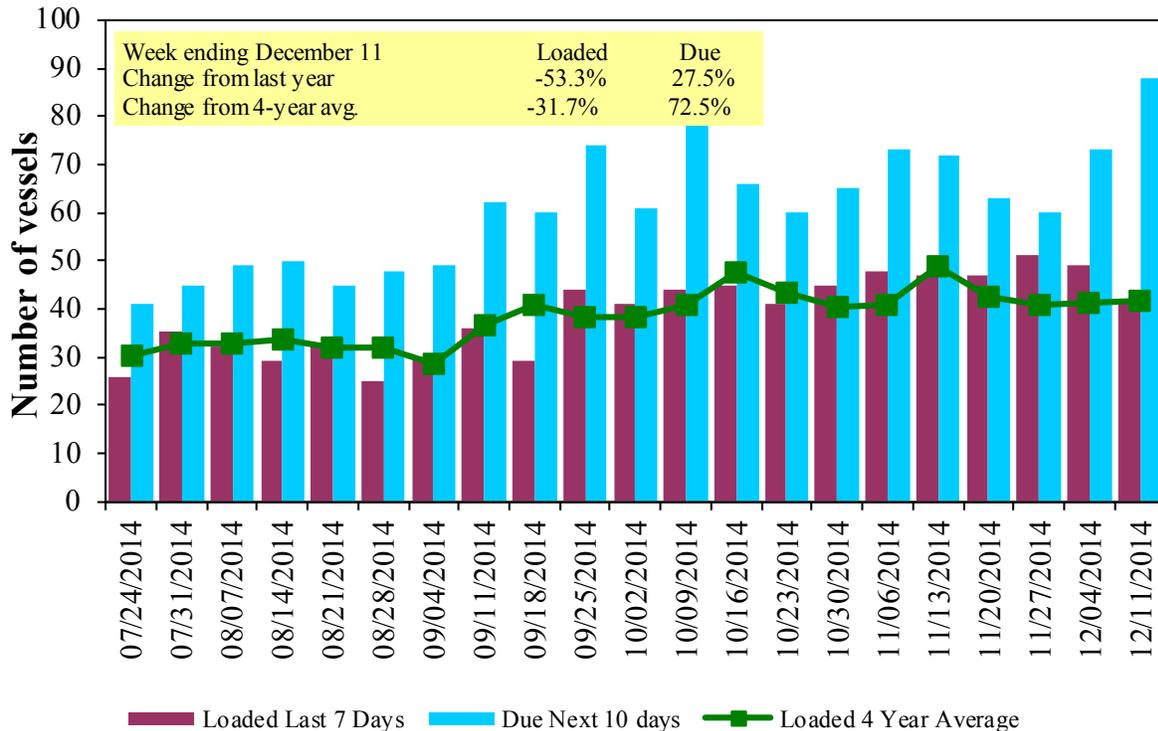
Weekly Port Region Grain Ocean Vessel Activity (number of vessels)

Date	Gulf			Pacific Northwest	Vancouver B.C.
	In port	Loaded 7-days	Due next 10-days	In port	In port
12/11/2014	28	42	88	16	n/a
12/4/2014	38	49	73	14	n/a
2013 range	(16..60)	(20..56)	(31..81)	(0..24)	n/a
2013 avg.	32	33	51	12	n/a

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Figure 16

U.S. Gulf¹ Vessel Loading Activity

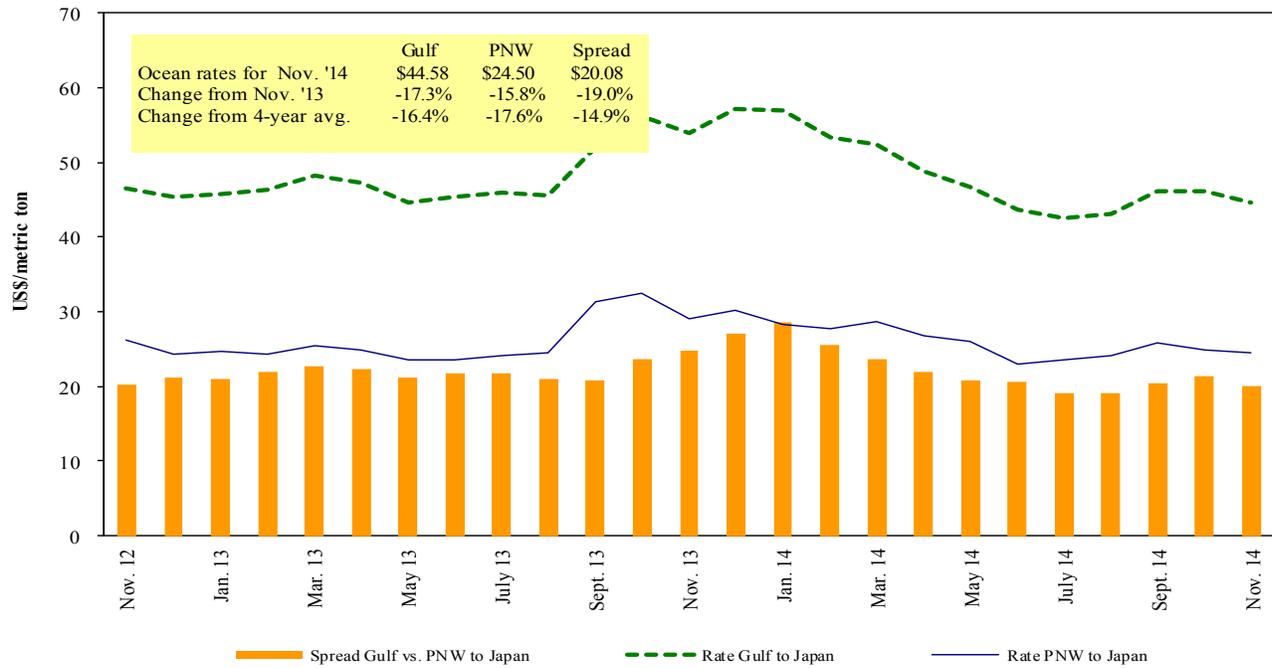


Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

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 12/13/2014

Export region	Import region	Grain types	Loading date	Volume loads (metric tons)	Freight rate (US\$/metric ton)
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Dec 15/30	5,500	40.25
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Dec 15/20	55,000	50.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Dec 10/17	55,000	41.75
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Dec 10/20	60,000	41.25
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Nov 25/30	60,000	43.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Nov 20/30	60,000	44.75
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Nov 15/25	55,000	44.25
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Nov 10/20	60,000	44.25
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Nov 5/15	60,000	45.25
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Nov 1/8	58,000	46.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 20/30	55,000	42.15
U.S. Gulf	China	Heavy Grain	Oct 20/30	58,000	44.00
U.S. Gulf	Brazil	Wheat	Nov 8/14	25,000	22.00
U.S. Gulf	Djibouti ¹	Wheat/Sorghum	Nov 20/30	22,000	68.50
PNW	China	Heavy Grain	Nov 1/30	60,000	26.50
PNW	China	Grain	Oct 20/30	60,000	23.00

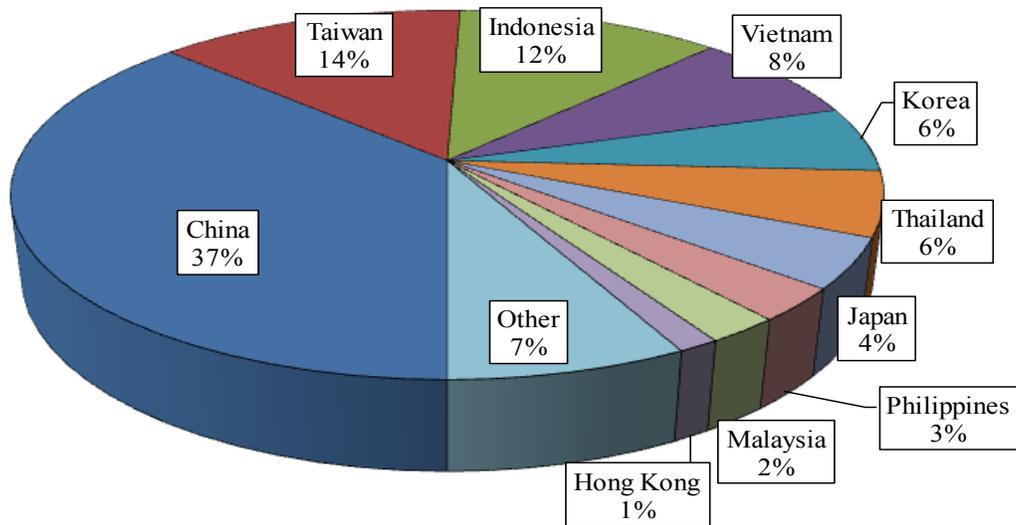
Rates shown are for metric ton (2,204.62 lbs. = 1 metric ton), F.O.B., except where otherwise indicates; op = option

¹ 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 2013, containers were used to transport 10 percent of total U.S. waterborne grain exports, up 2 percentage points from 2012. Approximately 61 percent of U.S. waterborne grain exports in 2013 went to Asia, of which 16 percent were moved in containers. Asia is the top destination for U.S. containerized grain exports—97 percent in 2013.

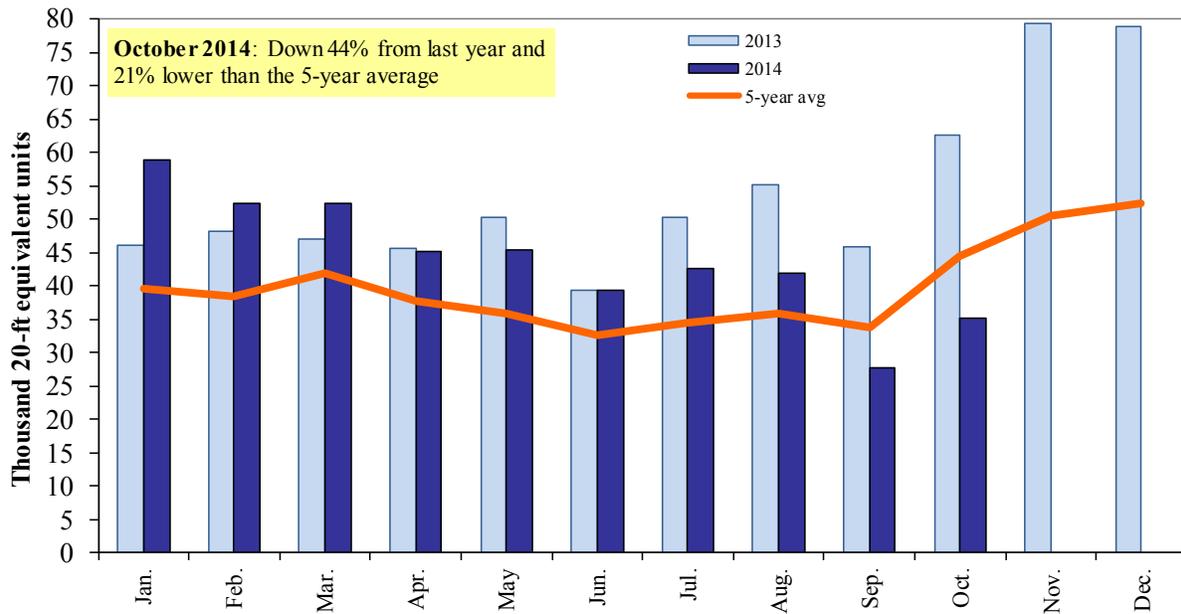
Figure 18
Top 10 Destination Markets for U.S. Containerized Grain Exports, January-October, 2014



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, 230310, 110220, 110290, 120100, 230210, 230990, 230330, and 120810.

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Preferred citation: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service. *Grain Transportation Report*. December 18, 2014. Web: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9752/TS056.12-18-2014>

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