



Grain Transportation Report

A weekly publication of the
Transportation and Marketing Programs/Transportation Services Division
www.ams.usda.gov/GTR

Contact Us

December 25, 2008

WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

Contents

Article/
Calendar

Grain
Transportation
Indicators

Rail

Barge

Truck

Exports

Ocean

Brazil

Mexico

Quarterly
Updates

Specialists

Subscription
Information

The next
release is
Jan. 1, '09

Ice Slows Barge Traffic

Very cold temperatures have caused ice accumulations at Mississippi River Lock 21 (Quincy, IL), Lock 22 (New London, MO), and Lock 25 (Winfield, MO), resulting in slower and less efficient barge traffic. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has placed a 70-foot width restriction at these facilities, so that tows must limit their width size until conditions improve. Normally, these locks can handle a tow of barges that is 3 barges wide, however with these restrictions only tows that are 2-barges wide can transit the lock. These conditions raise costs for barge operators, but **barge rates** at St. Louis have increased only slightly partly due to lower freight demand. **Barge rates** on the Illinois River increased 10 percent from last week due to poor navigation conditions.

Corn Inspections Continue to Increase

For the week ending December 18, **total inspections** of grain (corn, wheat, and soybeans) for export from the major export regions reached 1.67 million metric tons (mmt), down 11 percent from the previous week and 29 percent below last year. Although total grain inspections decreased in all major export regions, total inspections of corn (.714 mmt) from all major ports increased for the second consecutive week—up 6 percent from the previous week. Mississippi Gulf corn inspections (.435 mmt) also continued to increase—up about 10 percent from the previous week due in part to increased shipments to Japan and Korea.

EPA Issues Final 2008 Vessel General Permit

On December 18, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) added a final Vessel General Permit (VGP) to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The goal of the VGP is to reduce releases of 26 types of discharges from vessels operating in U.S. waters. Beginning February 6, 2009, approximately 61,000 domestically flagged commercial vessels and 8,000 foreign flagged vessels will need to comply with the permit. The permit covers non-recreational vessels 79 feet in length or longer, such as cruise ships or oil and cargo tankers, but excludes fishing vessels of any length, unless they discharge ballast water. For more information, please view: http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/home.cfm?program_id=350

Snapshots by Sector

Rail

U.S. railroads originated 20,843 **carloads of grain** during the week ending December 13, down 6.5 percent from the previous week, down 9.2 percent from the same week last year, and 11.2 percent lower than the 3-year average.

During the week ending December 20, average **Secondary Railcar Bids/Offers** were \$62 under tariff for non-shuttle, \$38 higher than last week. Shuttle rates were \$100 under tariff, \$19 higher than last week.

Ocean

During the week ending December 18, 33 ocean-going **grain vessels** were loaded in the Gulf, down 43 percent from last year. Thirty-eight **vessels** are due within the next 10 days, down 53 percent from last year.

Barge

During the week ending December 20, **barge grain movements** totaled 566,590 tons, 8 percent lower than the previous week, but 31 percent higher than the same period last year.

Fuel

During the week ending December 22, U.S. average **diesel fuel prices** decreased 6 cents per gallon to \$2.37—2 percent lower than the previous week and 28 percent lower than the same week last year.

Feature Article/Calendar

To Our Readers:

USDA's *Grain Transportation Report (GTR)* team recognizes the U.S. grain business is highly competitive, fast paced, and ever evolving. We know the industry's need for timely and high quality information is essential for making good transportation and marketing decisions. We also know an efficient and well informed grain industry is critical to U.S. Agriculture and our Nation's economy. Thus, our team aspires to provide the U.S. grain industry with up-to-date, timely and insightful information throughout the year to assist the industry in making sound decisions.

Reflecting on 2008, it can be said that the United States possesses a diverse and efficient transportation network. These networks were challenged at several points during the year by volatile fuel prices, natural disasters, and a severe economic downturn, to name a few. Despite these challenges, and as a testament to the U.S. transportation system's flexibility, grain transportation continued surprisingly smoothly throughout the year.

Early in 2008, colder than average weather caused ice accumulations that limited barge traffic on segments of the river system normally open during the winter. At the same time the U.S. Class I Rail Grain Car loadings were consistently above the 3-year average. Spring and summer floods caused dangerous high-water conditions closing the Mississippi river to barge traffic for extensive periods. The same floods also closed several key rail and highway bridges crossing the river. An oil spill in New Orleans brought navigation to a standstill and then restricted the pace of traffic during the clean-up process. Later in the year, hurricanes along the Gulf Coast disrupted normal transportation cycles in New Orleans and Houston. Through this string of events, major parts of the Mississippi River System were disrupted and the shipping season was substantially truncated compared to a normal year – cumulatively almost 2 months of the barge shipping season when combined together. Yet, the resilience of our transportation system was able to handle these shocks and the grain continued to flow, although less efficiently and at higher cost than is normal.

Unprecedented global demand for bulk ocean freight service sent freight rates soaring in early summer. As a result, some traditional bulk grain exporters began using containers to take advantage of the competitive costs. As fall approached, the global economic slowdown began to settle in, slowing trade volumes globally. By December, bulk ocean freight rates had fallen more than 80 percent from the peak earlier in the year. During the same time, container rates also fell—nearly 25 percent from the peak high. The drop in bulk ocean freight rates made container rates less competitive and turned many traditional bulk grain exporters back to bulk transportation.

In the latter half of 2008 the economic downturn played an important role in the demand for transportation. The U.S. rail grain car loadings began the year above the 3-year average and continued that way until September. Since September, average grain car loadings have not reached the 3-year average most likely due to the economic downturn and a resulting decrease in transportation demand. In 2008, grain barges unloaded for export in New Orleans year-to-date are almost 20 percent lower than in 2007.

Volatile fuel prices were also a concern through much of 2008. The U.S. weekly average on-highway diesel fuel price started the year at \$3.38 and by July 14 reached a record high of \$4.76 per gallon. Recently, the economic downturn and a resulting decreased demand for transportation capacity have reduced the price this week to \$2.37 per gallon. The North American Railroad weighted average fuel surcharge was carried by the diesel price to an all time high of 0.59 cents per mile for the month of September and has since dropped to 0.20 cents for January 2009.

As we look forward to 2009, we are thankful for our many blessings and look forward to another great year for the GTR. We sincerely appreciate the many industry representatives and Government sources that regularly and voluntarily provide us with the necessary information and data included in this report. Finally, we wish our many readers a happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous New Year!

Sincerely,

The Grain Transportation Report Team

Grain Transportation Indicators

Table 1

Grain Transport Cost Indicators¹

Week ending	Truck	Rail ²	Barge	Ocean	
				Gulf	Pacific
12/24/08	159	33	288	103	92
12/17/08	162	-5	261	103	92

¹Indicator: Base year 2000 = 100; Weekly updates include truck = diesel (\$/gallon); rail = nearby secondary rail market (\$/car); barge = Illinois River barge rate (index = percent of tariff rate); and ocean = routes to Japan (\$/metric ton)

²The rail indicator is not an index. It is the difference between the nearby secondary rail market bid for this week and the average bid for year 2000 (+) 100.

Table 2

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

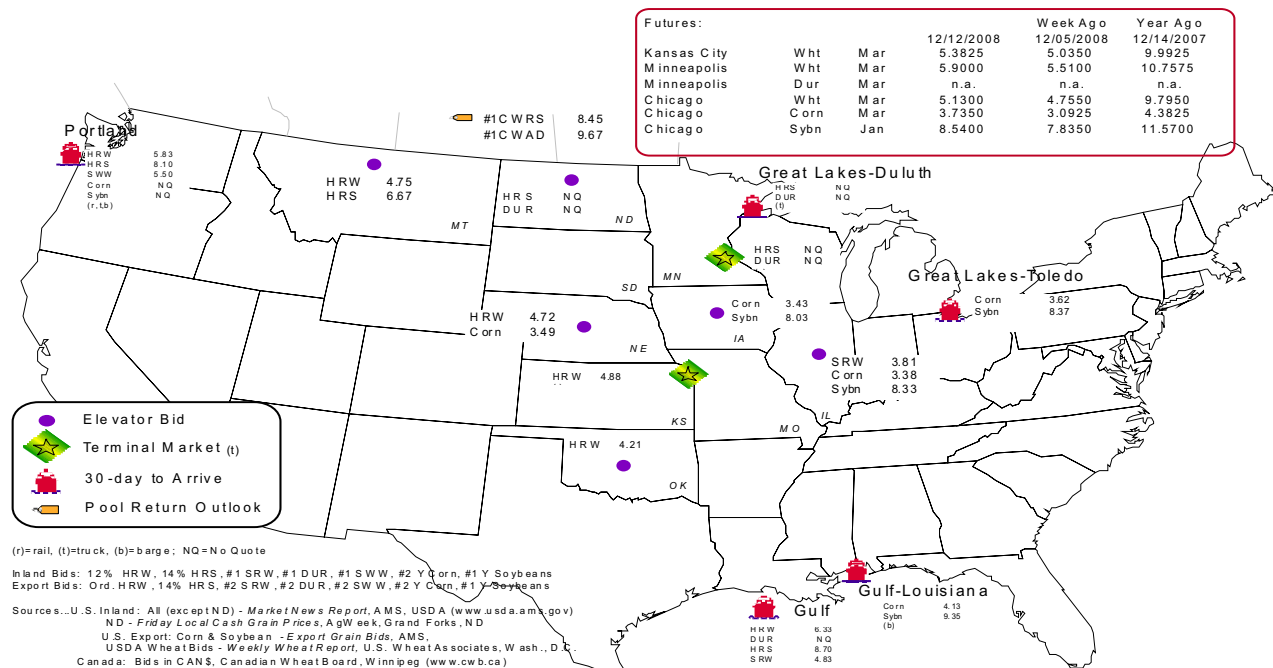
Commodity	Origin--Destination	12/12/2008	12/5/2008
Corn	IL--Gulf	-0.75	-0.67
Corn	NE--Gulf	-0.64	-0.58
Soybean	IA--Gulf	-1.32	-1.23
HRW	KS--Gulf	-1.45	-1.41
HRS	ND--Portland	n/a	n/a

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		Cross-Border		Pacific	Atlantic &	Total
	Gulf ²	Texas Gulf	Mexico	Northwest	East Gulf		
12/17/2008 ^p	769	338	539	2,872	702	5,220	
12/10/2008 ^r	1,093	785	899	4,069	788	7,634	
2008 YTD	67,273	105,421	36,106	251,435	32,336	492,571	
2007 YTD	60,595	111,970	40,512	223,655	30,342	467,074	
2008 YTD as % of 2007 YTD	111	94	89	112	107	105	
Last 4 weeks as % of 2007 ³	63	38	209	71	63	68	
Last 4 weeks as % of 4-year avg. ³	71	43	82	83	98	74	
Total 2007	62,169	113,730	40,725	227,970	31,369	475,963	
Total 2006	96,593	99,866	45,971	213,682	29,334	485,446	

¹ Data is incomplete as it is voluntarily provided; ² Mississippi Gulf data back to January, 2004 from several new sources has been added resulting in large increases in the numbers reported; ³ Compared with same 4-weeks in 2007 and prior 4-year average.

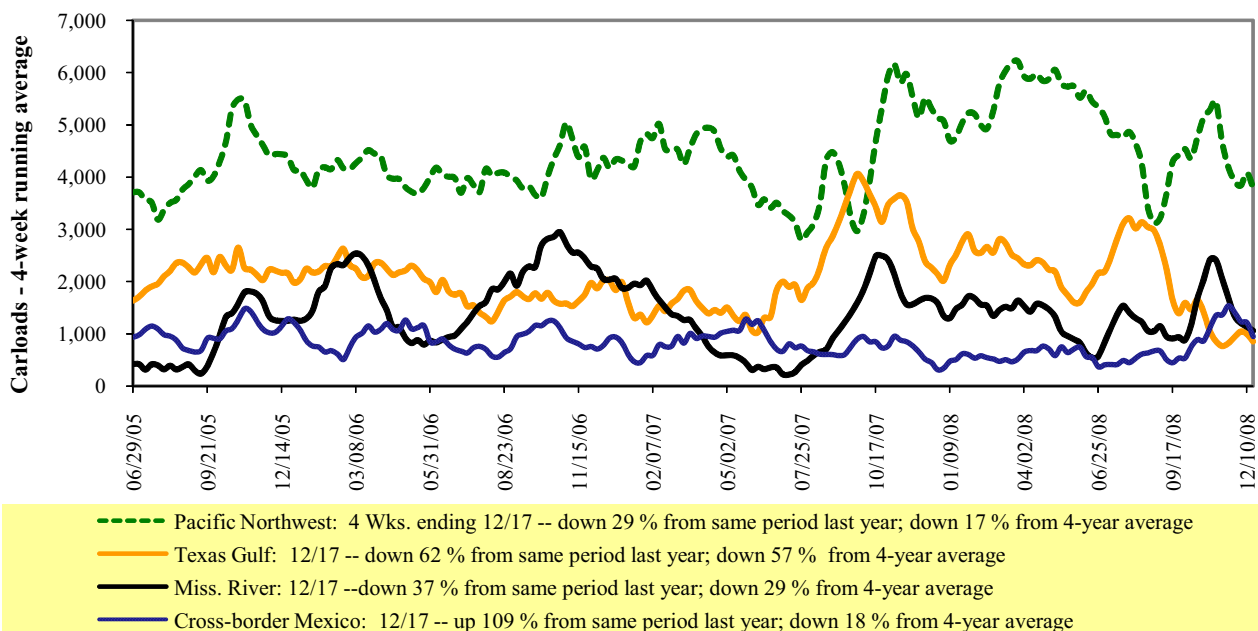
YTD = year-to-date; p = preliminary data; r = revised data; n/a = not available

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Railroads originate approximately 35 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

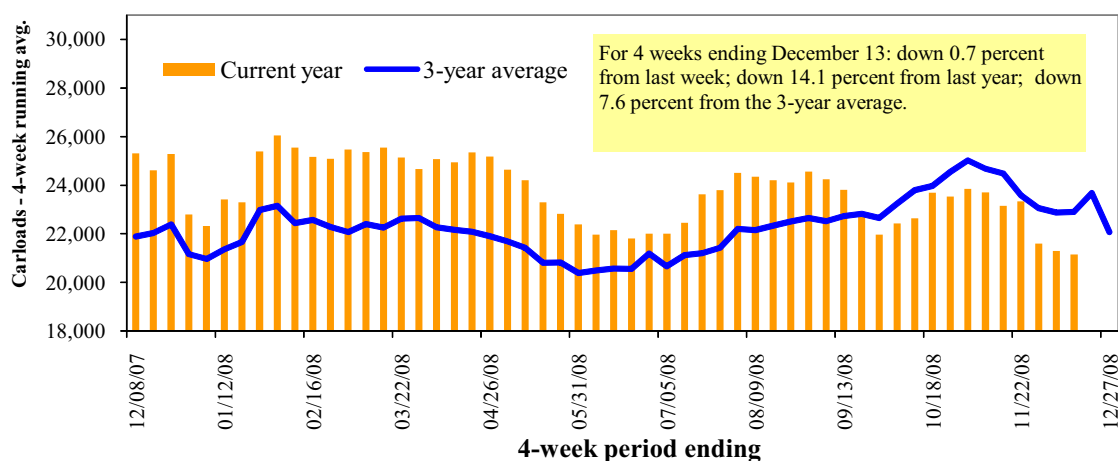
Class I Rail Carrier Grain Car Bulletin (grain carloads originated)

Week ending	East		West			U.S. total	Canada	
	CSXT	NS	BNSF	KCS	UP		CN	CP
12/13/08	2,373	2,615	10,647	788	4,420	20,843	4,336	4,969
This week last year	2,723	3,224	11,099	549	5,359	22,954	4,744	5,185
2008 YTD	130,933	155,292	551,493	36,056	310,677	1,184,451	217,110	211,597
2007 YTD	142,547	161,716	514,716	32,874	282,488	1,134,341	241,900	233,095
2008 YTD as % of 2007 YTD	92	96	107	110	110	104	90	91
Last 4 weeks as % of 2007 ¹	66	85	93	111	82	86	91	107
Last 4 weeks as % of 3-yr avg. ¹	68	88	100	143	89	92	88	107
Total 2007	147,937	166,780	536,362	33,980	292,973	1,178,032	250,852	240,401

¹As a percent of the same period in 2007 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

Rail Car Auction Offerings¹ (\$/car)²

Week ending	Delivery period							
	Jan-09	Jan-08	Feb-09	Feb-08	Mar-09	Mar-08	Apr-09	Apr-08
12/20/2008								
BNSF ³								
COT grain units	no offer	no offer	no bids	0	no bids	no offer	no bids	no offer
COT grain single-car ⁵	no offer	no offer	0	0	0	0	0	no bids
UP ⁴								
GCAS/Region 1	no bids	no bids	no bids	no bids	no bids	no offer	no offer	no offer
GCAS/Region 2	no bids	no bids	no bids	no bids	no bids	no offer	no offer	no offer

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.

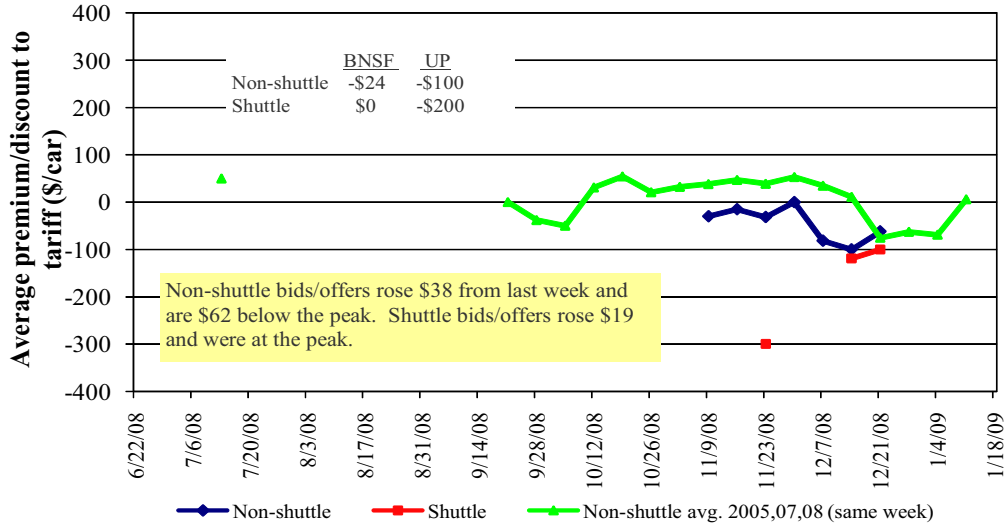
Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA.

Rail service may be ordered directly from the railroad via **auction** for guaranteed service, or via tariff for nonguaranteed service, or through the secondary railcar market.

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

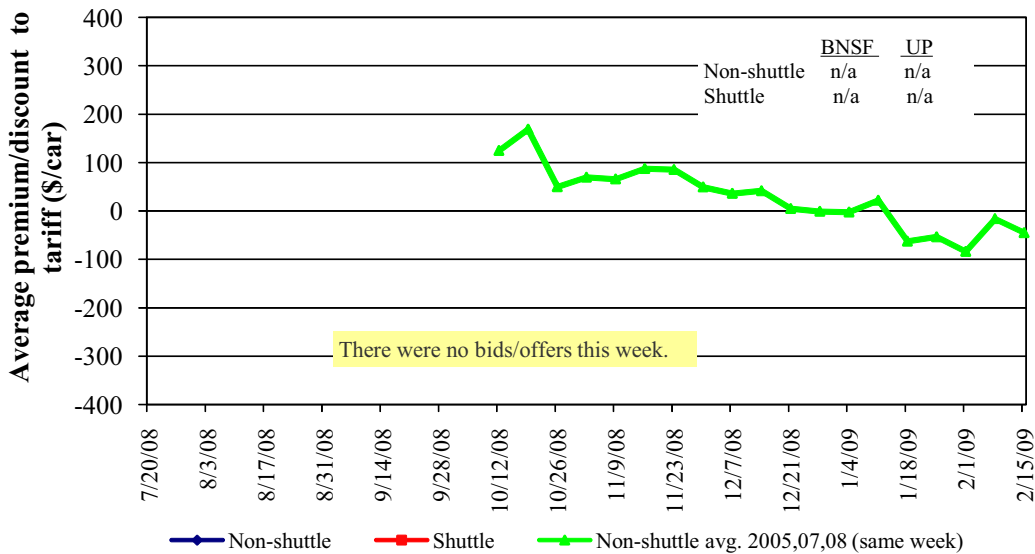
Bids/Offers for Railcars to be Delivered in January 2009, Secondary Market



Excludes 2006 from the 3-year non-shuttle average due to abnormally high rates following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Non-shuttle bids include unit-train and single-car bids. n/a = not available. Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Figure 5

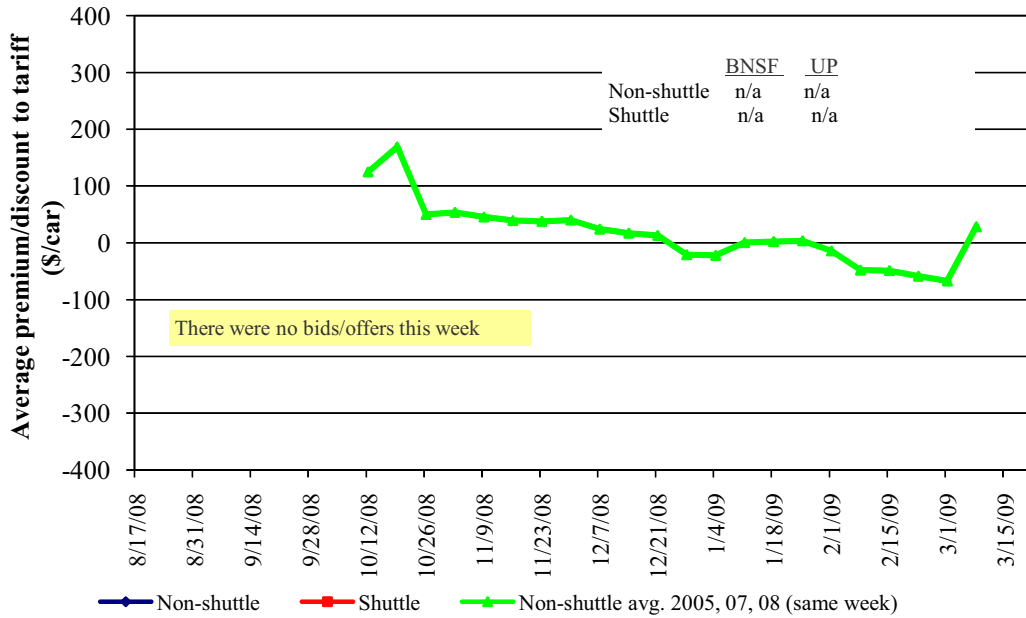
Bids/Offers for Railcars to be Delivered in February 2009, Secondary Market



Excludes 2006 from the 3-year non-shuttle average due to abnormally high rates following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. 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 March 2009, Secondary Market



Excludes 2006 from the 3-year non-shuttle average due to abnormally high rates following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Non-shuttle bids include unit-train and single-car bids. n/a = not available.

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Table 6

Weekly Secondary Rail Car Market (\$/car)¹

Week ending	Delivery period					
	Jan-09	Feb-09	Mar-09	Apr-09	May-09	Jun-09
12/20/2008						
Non-shuttle						
BNSF-GF	-24	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
Change from last week	44	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
Change from same week 2007	-63	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
UP-Pool	-100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
Change from last week	32	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
Change from same week 2007	81	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
Shuttle²						
BNSF-GF	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
Change from last week	119	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
Change from same week 2007	44	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
UP-Pool	-200	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
Change from last week	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/
Change from same week 2007	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/

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 Atwood/ConAgra, Harvest States Co-op, James B. Joiner Co., Tradewest Brokerage Co.

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
12/1/2008	metric ton					bushel ²		
Unit train¹								
Wheat	Chicago, IL	Albany, NY	\$2,422	\$250	\$29.46	\$0.80	8	
	Kansas City, MO	Galveston, TX	\$2,528	\$248	\$30.59	\$0.83	14	
	South Central, KS	Galveston, TX	\$3,270	\$414	\$40.61	\$1.11	17	
	Minneapolis, MN	Houston, TX	\$3,414	\$839	\$46.88	\$1.28	10	
	St. Louis, MO	Houston, TX	\$3,180	\$240	\$37.70	\$1.03	18	
	South Central, ND	Houston, TX	\$5,228	\$933	\$67.91	\$1.85	18	
	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$3,940	\$1,020	\$54.67	\$1.49	7	
	South Central, ND	Portland, OR	\$3,940	\$837	\$52.66	\$1.43	6	
	Northwest, KS	Portland, OR	\$4,715	\$1,115	\$64.26	\$1.75	7	
	Chicago, IL	Richmond, VA	\$2,557	\$350	\$32.05	\$0.87	12	
Corn	Chicago, IL	Baton Rouge, LA	\$3,291	\$303	\$39.62	\$1.01	4	
	Council Bluffs, IA	Baton Rouge, LA	\$3,223	\$324	\$39.10	\$0.99	7	
	Kansas City, MO	Dalhart, TX	\$3,284	\$302	\$39.53	\$1.00	4	
	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$3,430	\$1,020	\$49.05	\$1.25	7	
	Evansville, IN	Raleigh, NC	\$3,008	\$342	\$36.93	\$0.94	14	
	Columbus, OH	Raleigh, NC	\$2,897	\$300	\$35.24	\$0.90	14	
	Council Bluffs, IA	Stockton, CA	\$5,390	\$1,102	\$71.56	\$1.82	6	
Soybeans	Chicago, IL	Baton Rouge, LA	\$3,345	\$303	\$40.21	\$1.09	4	
	Council Bluffs, IA	Baton Rouge, LA	\$3,192	\$324	\$38.76	\$1.05	4	
	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$4,360	\$1,020	\$59.30	\$1.61	9	
	Evansville, IN	Raleigh, NC	\$3,008	\$342	\$36.93	\$1.01	14	
	Chicago, IL	Raleigh, NC	\$3,608	\$426	\$44.47	\$1.21	12	
Shuttle Train								
Wheat	St. Louis, MO	Houston, TX	\$2,642	\$240	\$31.77	\$0.86	22	
	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$3,540	\$1,020	\$50.26	\$1.37	5	
Corn	Fremont, NE	Houston, TX	\$2,268	\$617	\$31.80	\$0.81	-2	
	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$3,168	\$1,020	\$46.16	\$1.17	1	
Soybeans	Council Bluffs, IA	Houston, TX	\$2,787	\$598	\$37.31	\$1.02	10	
	Minneapolis, MN	Portland, OR	\$3,502	\$1,020	\$49.84	\$1.36	5	

¹A unit train refers to shipments of at least 52 cars. Shuttle train rates are available for qualified shipments of

75-110 cars that meet railroad efficiency requirements.

²Approximate load per car = 100 short tons (90.72 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

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	Tariff plus surcharge per:		Percent change Y/Y ³
					metric ton	bushel ²	
Wheat	MT	Chihuahua, CI	\$5,803	\$949	\$68.99	\$1.88	7
	OK	Cuautitlan, EM	\$5,314	\$783	\$62.29	\$1.69	11
	KS	Guadalajara, JA	\$5,784	\$815	\$67.43	\$1.83	9
	TX	Salinas Victoria, NL	\$2,956	\$272	\$32.99	\$0.90	n/a
Corn	IA	Guadalajara, JA	\$6,745	\$944	\$78.57	\$1.99	4
	SD	Penjamo, GJ	\$6,600	\$1,241	\$80.12	\$2.03	3
	NE	Queretaro, QA	\$6,233	\$824	\$72.11	\$1.83	n/a
	SD	Salinas Victoria, NL	\$4,740	\$943	\$58.07	\$1.47	7
	MO	Tlalnepantla, EM	\$5,425	\$802	\$63.62	\$1.61	n/a
	SD	Torreon, CU	\$5,510	\$1,040	\$66.92	\$1.70	4
Soybeans	MO	Bojay (Tula), HG	\$6,183	\$816	\$71.51	\$1.94	4
	NE	Guadalajara, JA	\$6,690	\$935	\$77.91	\$2.12	5
	IA	Penjamo (Celaya), GJ	\$6,350	\$1,234	\$77.49	\$2.11	2
	KS	Torreon, CU	\$5,275	\$625	\$60.28	\$1.64	3
Sorghum	OK	Cuautitlan, EM	\$4,309	\$942	\$53.66	\$1.36	8
	TX	Guadalajara, JA	\$4,800	\$808	\$57.30	\$1.45	5
	NE	Penjamo, GJ	\$6,420	\$861	\$74.40	\$1.89	6
	KS	Queretaro, QA	\$5,568	\$615	\$63.17	\$1.60	8
	NE	Salinas Victoria, NL	\$4,477	\$624	\$52.12	\$1.32	9
	NE	Torreon, CU	\$5,255	\$709	\$60.94	\$1.55	4

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.

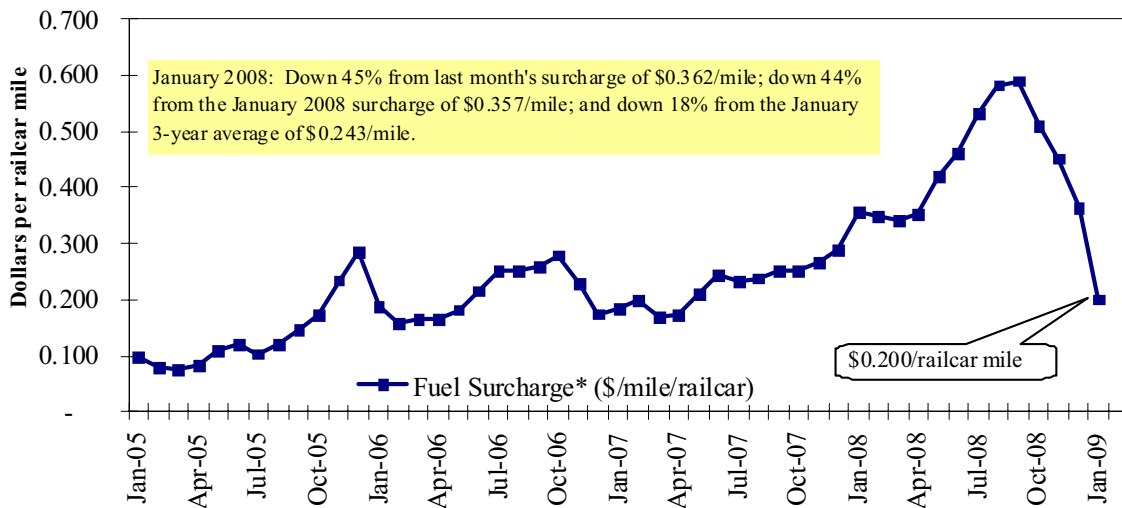
²Approximate load per car = 97.87 metric tons: Corn & Sorghum 56 lbs/bu, Wheat & Soybeans 60 lbs/bu

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

Sources: www.bnsf.com, www.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.

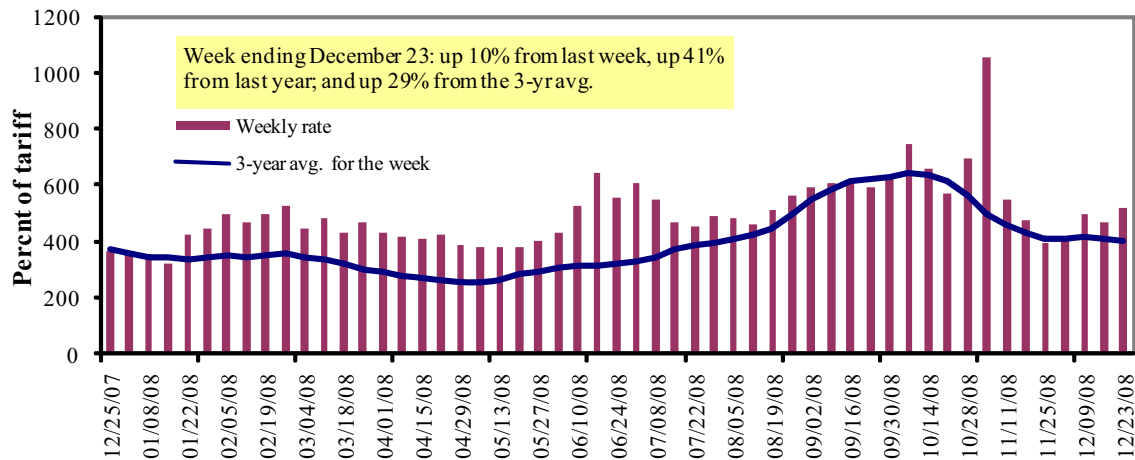
* Mileage-based fuel surcharges from December 2004 through the March 2007 are estimated. CP Fuel Surcharge for Jan. 1 - 15, 2009 is not included. CP will calculate the fuel surcharge based on the average on-highway diesel prices between Nov. 27 - Dec. 11, 2008. This figure will be updated as CP releases its fuel surcharge rate.

Sources: www.bnsf.com www.cn.ca www8.cnr.ca www.csx.com www.ksf.com www.nsc.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	Illinois River	St. Louis	Cincinnati	Lower Ohio	Cairo-Memphis
Rate¹	12/23/2008	-	-	519	415	388	388	298
	12/16/2008	-	-	470	401	380	380	303
\$/ton	12/23/2008	-	-	24.07	16.56	18.17	15.66	9.34
	12/16/2008	-	-	21.81	16.00	17.82	15.35	9.51
Current week % change from the same week:								
	Last year	-	-	41	48	15	15	19
	3-year avg. ²	-	-	29	28	12	12	9
Rate¹	January	-	-	475	370	373	373	289
	March	-	-	376	336	349	349	290

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

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Calculating barge rate per ton:

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

Select applicable index from market quotes included in tables on this page. The 1976 benchmark rates per ton are provided in map (see figure 9).

Figure 9
Benchmark tariff rates

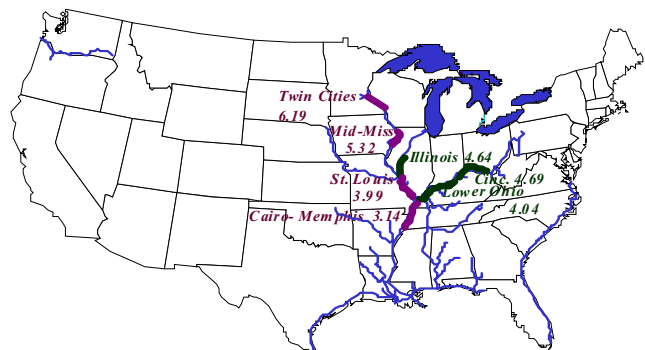
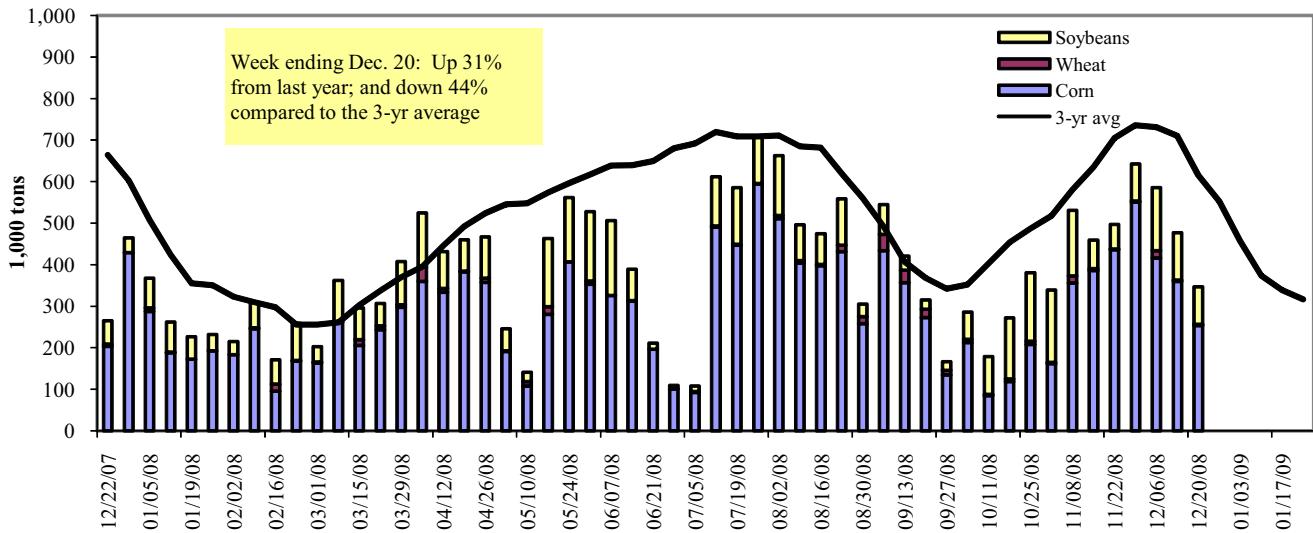


Figure 10

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 (www.mvr.usace.army.mil/mvrimi/omni/web/rpts/default.asp)

Table 10

Barge Grain Movements (1,000 tons)

Week ending 12/20/2008	Corn	Wheat	Soybeans	Other	Total
Mississippi River					
Rock Island, IL (L15)	3	0	0	0	3
Winfield, MO (L25)	48	0	10	0	58
Alton, IL (L26)	229	15	89	0	333
Granite City, IL (L27)	254	3	90	0	347
Illinois River (L8)	181	3	52	0	236
Ohio River (L52)	113	21	59	0	193
Arkansas River (L1)	0	0	20	8	27
Weekly total - 2008	366	24	169	8	567
Weekly total - 2007	291	17	106	22	434
2008 YTD ¹	18,636	1,535	6,865	0	27,484
2007 YTD	24,972	1,701	6,436	584	33,693
2008 as % of 2007 YTD	75	90	107	0	82
Last 4 weeks as % of 2007 ²	87	73	92	32	87
Total 2007	25,510	1,711	6,566	1,058	34,398

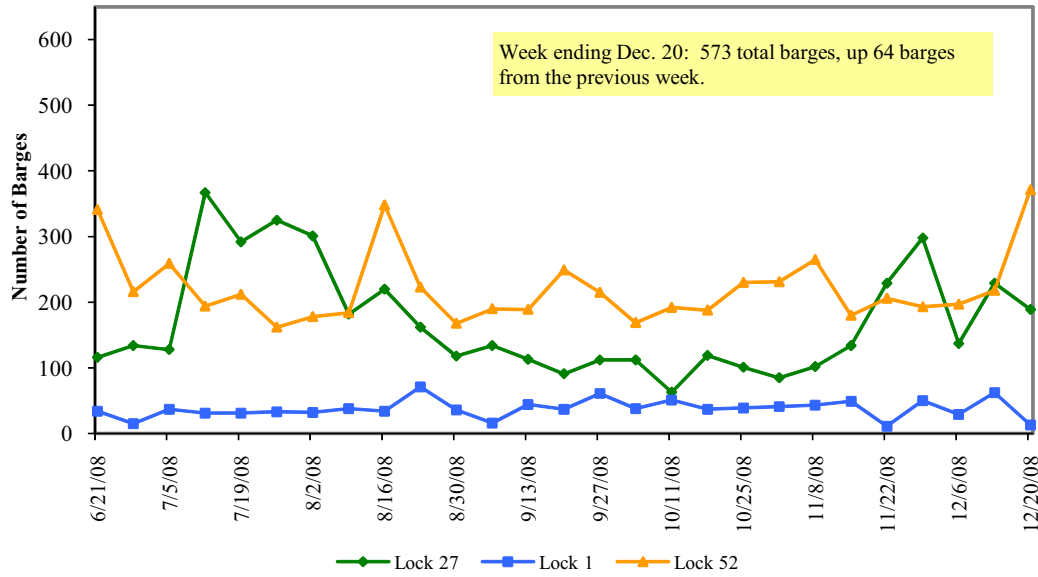
¹ Weekly total, YTD (year-to-date) and calendar year total includes Miss/27, Ohio/52, and Ark/1; "Other" refers to oats, barley, sorghum, and rye.

² As a percent of same period in 2007.

Note: Total may not add exactly, due to rounding

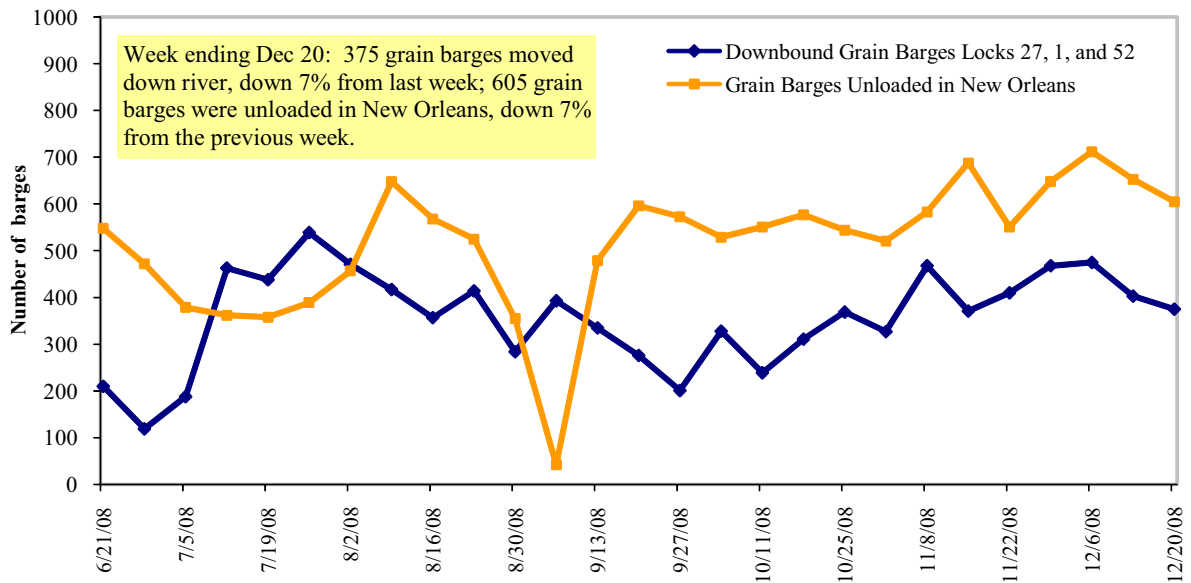
Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (www.mvr.usace.army.mil/mvrimi/omni/web/rpts/default.asp)

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 12/22/08 (US\$/gallon)

Region	Location	Price	Change from	
			Week ago	Year ago
I	East Coast	2.469	-0.065	-0.887
	New England	2.689	-0.051	-0.895
	Central Atlantic	2.566	-0.076	-0.931
	Lower Atlantic	2.406	-0.063	-0.869
II	Midwest ²	2.359	-0.047	-0.918
III	Gulf Coast ³	2.306	-0.072	-0.940
IV	Rocky Mountain	2.272	-0.078	-0.996
V	West Coast	2.274	-0.029	-1.137
	California	2.251	-0.041	-1.183
Total	U.S.	2.366	-0.056	-0.942

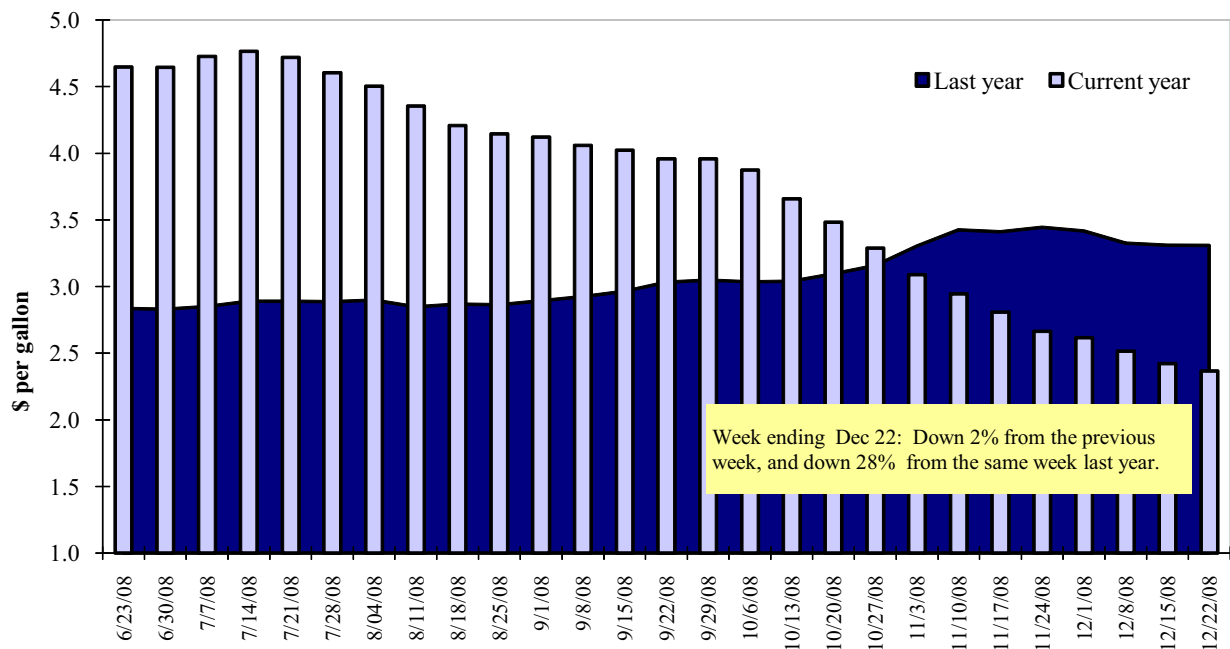
¹Diesel fuel prices include all taxes. Prices represent an average of all types of diesel fuel.

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									
12/11/2008	1,841	920	979	511	75	4,327	8,666	7,628	20,621
This week year ago	4,229	830	2,353	1,361	173	8,946	19,083	9,638	37,667
Cumulative exports-marketing year²									
2008/09 YTD	8,060	3,567	3,224	1,639	303	16,793	11,553	11,629	39,975
2007/08 YTD	7,956	4,053	4,653	2,478	766	19,906	18,657	10,368	48,931
YTD 2008/09 as % of 2007/08	101	88	69	66	40	84	62	112	82
Last 4 wks as % of same period 2007/08	44	112	46	42	58	51	46	84	57
2007/08 Total	13,709	5,568	7,842	4,191	1,075	32,385	59,666	30,411	122,462
2006/07 Total	6,800	3,866	6,480	4,996	761	22,902	53,799	30,261	106,962

¹ Current unshipped export sales to date

² Shipped export sales to date; new marketing year now 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 12/11/08	Total Commitments ²		% change current MY from last MY	Exports ³ 2007/08
	2008/09	2007/08		
	Current MY	Last MY		
	- 1,000 mt -			- 1,000 mt -
Japan	6,969	8,878	(21)	15,294
Mexico	4,569	5,893	(22)	8,767
Korea	1,522	4,488	(66)	8,621
Taiwan	767	2,007	(62)	3,476
Egypt	687	2,380	(71)	3,309
Top 5 importers	14,515	23,646	(39)	39,467
Total US corn export sales	20,219	37,739	(46)	61,870
% of Projected	44%	61%		
Change from Last Week	612	1,168		
Top 5 importers' share of U.S. corn export sales	72%	63%		
USDA forecast, December 2008	45,720	61,870	(26)	
Corn Use for Ethanol USDA forecast, December 2008	93,980	76,861	22	

(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.

³FAS Marketing Year Final Reports - www.fas.usda.gov/export-sales/myfi_rpt.htm.

Table 14

Top 5 Importers¹ of U.S. Soybeans

Week ending 12/11/08	Total Commitments ²		% change current MY from last MY	Exports ³ 2007/08
	2008/09	2007/08		
	Current MY	Last MY		
	- 1,000 mt -			- 1,000 mt -
China	10,696	9,655	11	13,354
Mexico	1,301	1,711	(24)	3,575
Japan	1,696	1,694	0	2,710
EU-25	1,375	1,605	(14)	3,896
Taiwan	726	768	(5)	1,728
Top 5 importers	15,793	15,431	2	25,262
Total US soybean export sales	19,257	20,006	(4)	
% of Projected	67%	63%		
Change from last week	894	872		
Top 5 importers' share of U.S. soybean export sales	82%	77%		
USDA forecast, December 2008	28,580	31,600	(10)	
Soybean Use for Biodiesel USDA forecast, December 2008	7,430	7,148	4	

(n) indicates negative number.

¹Based on FAS 2006/07 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.³FAS Marketing Year Final Reports - www.fas.usda.gov/export-sales/myfi_rpt.htm.

Table 15

Top 10 Importers¹ of All U.S. Wheat

Week ending 12/11/08	Total Commitments ²		% change current MY from last MY	Exports ³ 2007/08
	2008/09	2007/08		
	Current MY	Last MY		
	- 1,000 mt -			- 1,000 mt -
Japan	2,223	2,290	(3)	3,319
Egypt	1,664	2,638	(37)	3,276
Nigeria	2,306	1,996	16	2,597
Mexico	2,054	2,173	(5)	2,568
Iraq	1,205	1,902	(37)	1,964
Philippines	1,233	1,609	(23)	1,538
Korea, South	809	1,363	(41)	1,509
Indonesia	419	565	(26)	1,093
Taiwan	375	812	(54)	1,068
Venezuela	397	690	(43)	997
Top 10 importers	12,685	16,036	(21)	19,930
Total US wheat export sales	21,120	28,852	(27)	34,400
% of Projected	78%	84%		
Change from last week	262	191		
Top 10 importers' share of U.S. wheat export sales	60%	56%		
USDA forecast, December 2008	27,220	34,400	(21)	

(n) indicates negative number.

¹Based on FAS 2007/08 Marketing Year Ranking Reports (except Algeria) - www.fas.usda.gov; Marketing year = Jun 1 - May 31.²Cumulative Exports (shipped) + Outstanding Sales (unshipped), FAS Weekly Export Sales Report.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 12/18/08	2008 YTD ¹	2007 YTD ¹	2008 YTD as % of 2007 YTD	Last 4-weeks as % of		Total ¹ 2007
					2007	3-yr. avg.	
Pacific Northwest							
Wheat	130	10,236	11,744	87	65	69	11,913
Corn	255	12,466	9,001	138	122	138	9,171
Soybeans	64	9,232	7,537	122	107	124	7,648
Total	449	31,933	28,282	113	96	106	28,732
Mississippi Gulf							
Wheat	34	6,268	6,228	101	106	115	6,296
Corn	435	27,740	34,263	81	55	62	34,832
Soybeans	654	15,613	14,429	108	128	139	14,930
Total	1,123	49,621	54,920	90	87	96	56,058
Texas Gulf							
Wheat	47	9,665	8,478	114	77	71	8,558
Corn	13	1,468	1,400	105	8	8	1,441
Soybeans	0	119	76	157	n/a	0	108
Total	60	11,252	9,954	113	55	52	10,107
Great Lakes							
Wheat	26	823	2,721	30	32	37	2,721
Corn	10	269	894	30	23	23	894
Soybeans	0	300	509	59	42	30	510
Total	37	1,392	4,124	34	32	31	4,125
Atlantic							
Wheat	0	828	1,281	65	2	4	1,281
Corn	0	542	676	80	4	6	699
Soybeans	3	528	556	95	47	51	564
Total	3	1,899	2,513	76	20	27	2,544
U.S. total from ports²							
Wheat	237	26,997	27,731	97	66	69	30,770
Corn	714	42,486	46,234	92	63	71	47,036
Soybeans	721	25,792	23,107	112	117	127	23,760
Total	1,672	95,275	97,072	98	81	89	101,566

¹ Includes weekly revisions, some regional totals may not add exactly due to rounding.

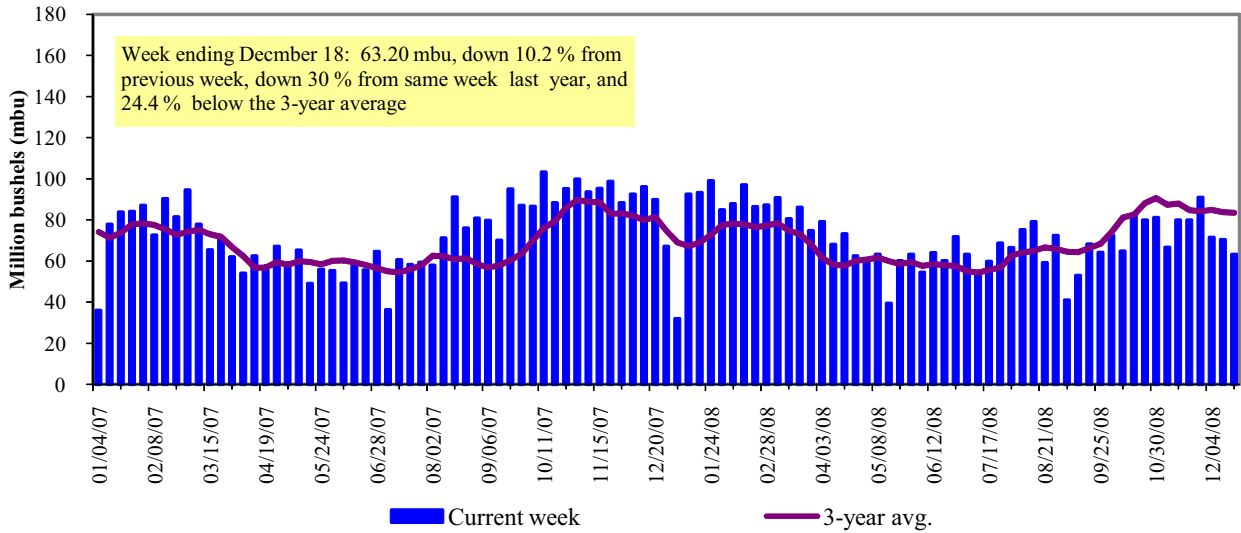
² Total includes only port regions shown above

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 48 percent of the U.S. export grain shipments departed through the Mississippi Gulf region in 2007.

Figure 14

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

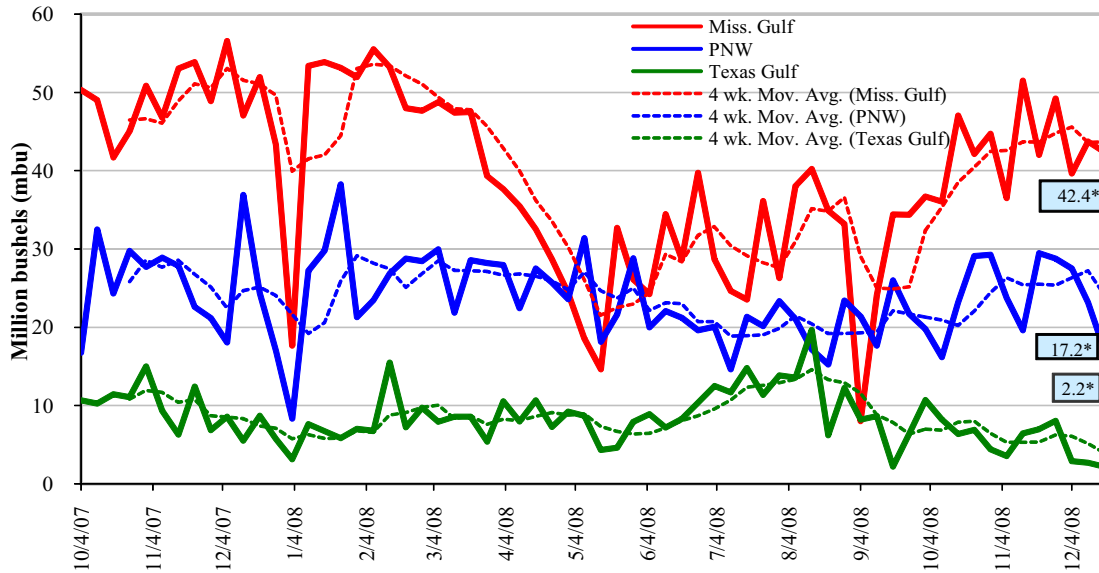


Source: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration/USDA (www.gipsa.usda.gov)

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

Figure 15

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



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

Dec 18: % change from:	MS Gulf	TX Gulf	U.S. Gulf	PNW
Last week	down 3	down 17	down 4	down 26
Last year (same week)	down 19	down 75	down 27	down 30
3-yr avg. (4-wk mov. avg.)	down 8	down 71	down 17	down 24

Ocean Transportation

Table 17

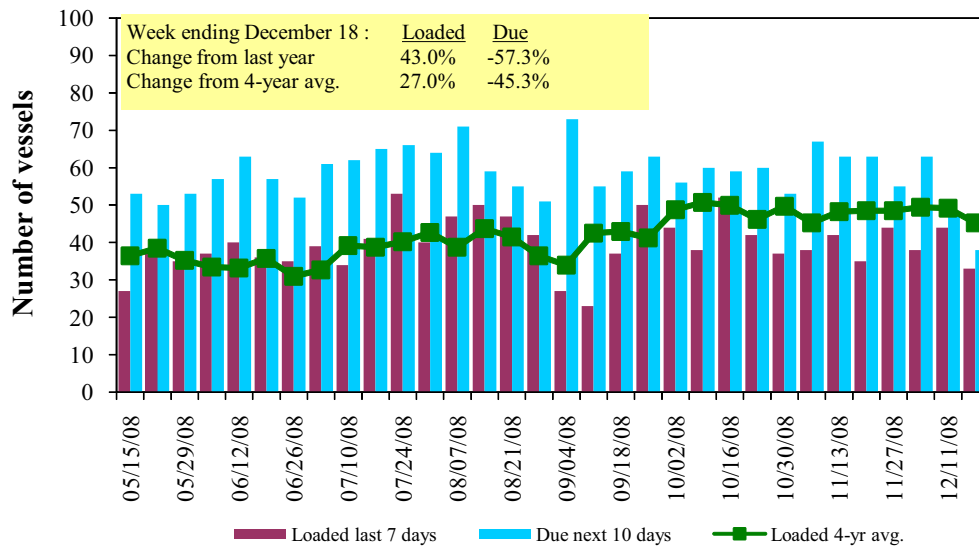
Weekly Port Region Grain Ocean Vessel Activity (number of vessels)

Date	Gulf			Pacific Northwest	Vancouver B.C.
	In port	Loaded 7-days	Due next 10-days	In port	In port
12/18/2008	40	33	38	9	9
12/11/2008	41	44	48	10	n/a
2007 range	(15..55)	(27..61)	(39..87)	(3..16)	(0..15)
2007 avg.	33	44	64	8	7

Source: Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Figure 16

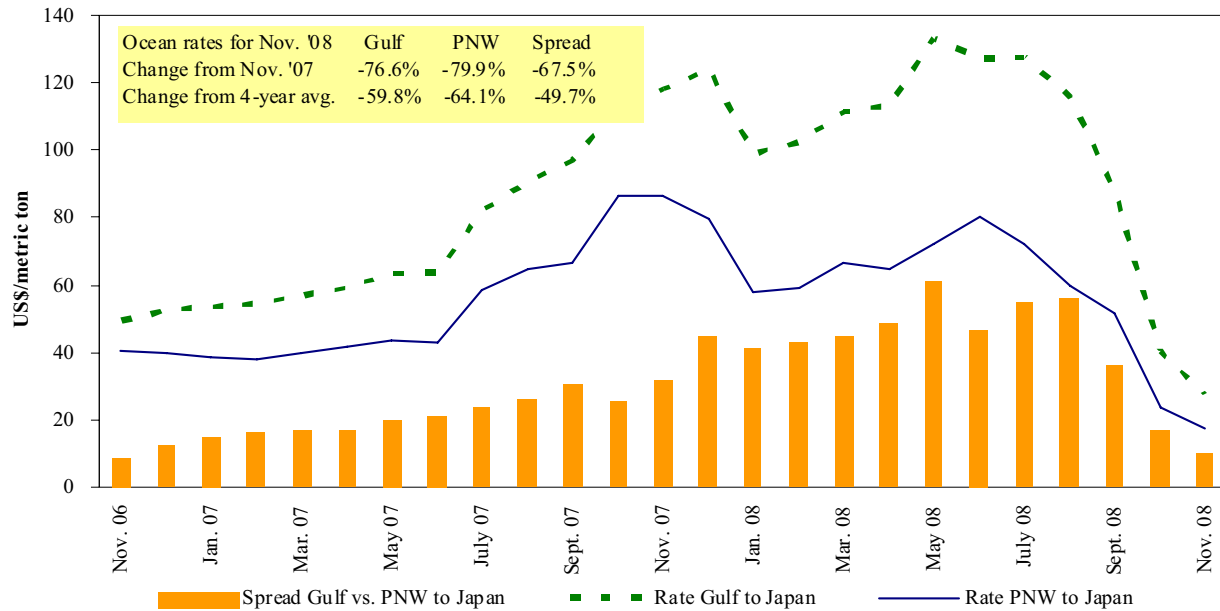
U.S. Gulf¹ Vessel Loading Activity



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

Figure 17

Grain Vessel Rates, U.S. to Japan



Source: Baltic Exchange (www.balticexchange.com)/Drewry Shipping Consultants Ltd (www.drewry.co.uk)/O'Neil Commodity Consulting

Table 18

Ocean Freight Rates For Selected Shipments, Week Ending 12/20/2008

Export region	Import region	Grain types	Loading date	Volume loads (metric tons)	Freight rate (US\$/metric ton)
U.S. Gulf	China	Hvy Grain	Dec 24/30	55,000	21.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Hvy Grain	Dec 1/10	55,000	26.50
U.S. Gulf	China	Hvy Grain	Dec 1/10	55,000	27.50
U.S. Gulf	China	Hvy Grain	Dec 11/20	55,000	27.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Hvy Grain	Nov 20/30	55,000	27.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Hvy Grain	Nov 20/21	55,000	30.00
U.S. Gulf	China	Hvy Grain	Nov 14/24	55,000	28.00
U.S. Gulf	Ethiopia ¹	Wheat	Oct 5/15	34,180	129.96
U.S. Gulf	Egypt Mediterranean	Wheat	Oct 10/20	60,000	54.00
U.S. Gulf	Rotterdam	Hvy Grain	Oct 7/10	60,000	32.50
Brazil	Montoir	Soybean Meal	Sep 9/15	43,000	55.00
France	Egypt Mediterranean	Hvy Grain	Nov 1/5	60,000	10.25
River Plate	Algeria	Hvy Grain	Oct 10/20	35,000	89.00
River Plate	Algeria	Hvy Grain	Nov 5/10	35,000	48.00
River Plate	Amsterdam	Hvy Grain	Oct 20/26	55,000	38.35
River Plate	China	Hvy Grain	Mar	60,000	32.50
River Plate	China	Hvy Grain	Apr	60,000	32.50
River Plate	Sp Mediterranean	Soybean meal	Dec 5/10	25,000	18.00
Russia	Egypt Mediterranean	Wheat	Sep 16/20	25,000	28.00

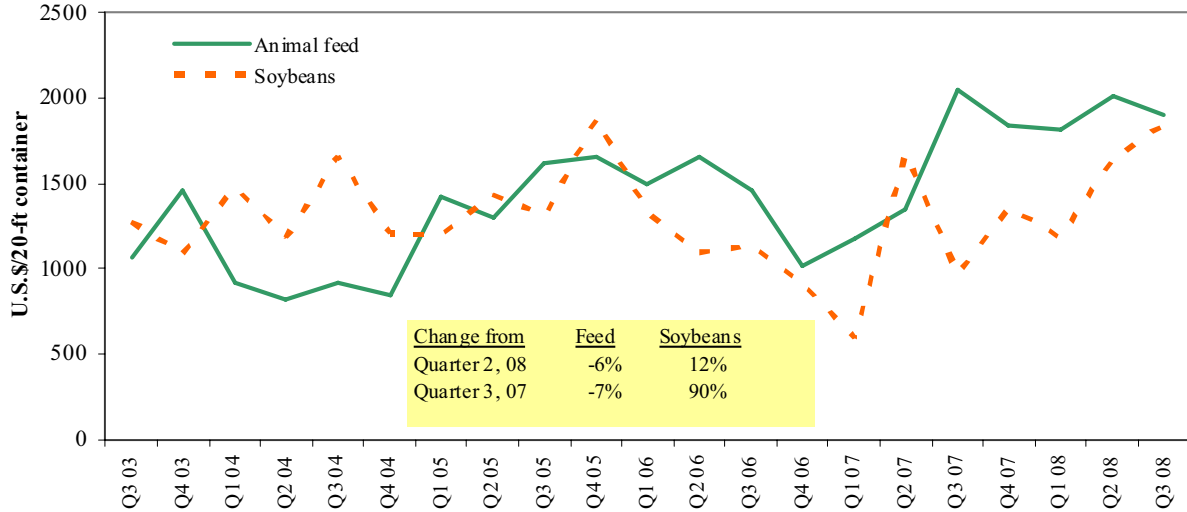
Rates shown are for metric ton (2,204.62 lbs. = 1 metric ton), F.O.B., except where otherwise indicates; op = option

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

Source: Maritime Research Inc. (www.maritimeresearch.com)

Figure 18

Ocean Rates¹ for Containerized Shipments to Selected Asian Countries



¹Rates are weighted by shipping line market share and destination country. Rates provided are publicly filed tariff rates, not those negotiated in a confidential service contract.

Countries include: Animal Feed: Bangkok-Thailand (3%), Busan-Korea (25%), Hong Kong (9%), Kaohsiung/Keelung-Taiwan (55%), Tokyo-Japan (8%). Soybeans: Kaohsiung/Keelung-Taiwan (97%), Tokyo-Japan (2%)

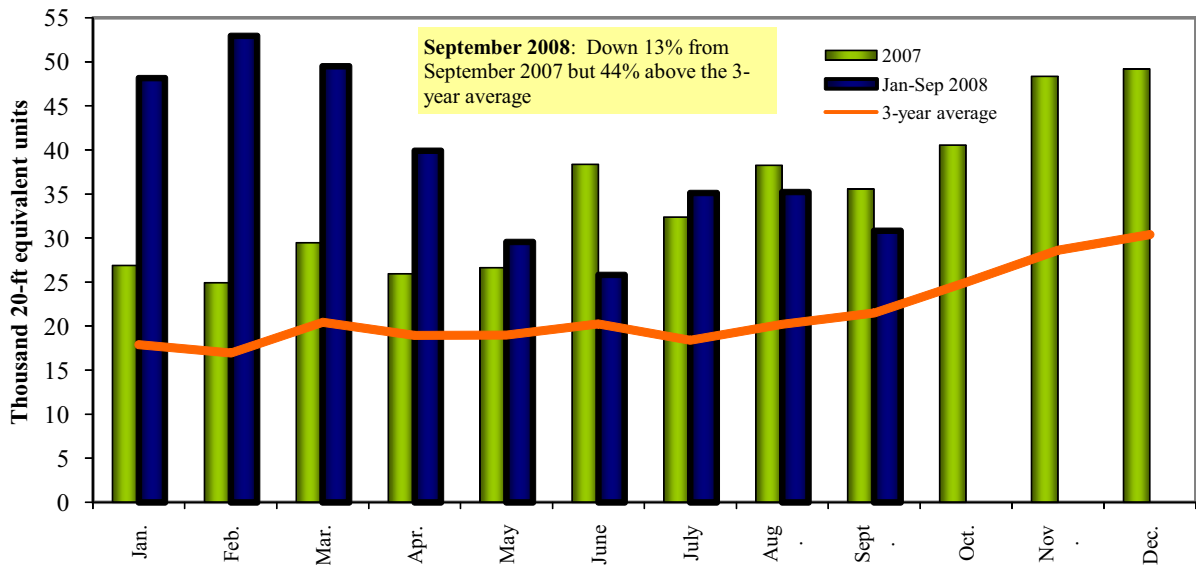
Source: Ocean Rate Bulletin, Quarter 3, 2008, Transportation & Marketing Programs/AMS/USDA

Container ocean freight rates – average rate per twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU) weighted by shipping line market share and trade route.

During 2007, containers were used to transport 5 percent of total U.S. waterborne grain exports, and 9 percent of U.S. grain exports to Asia.

Figure 19

Monthly Shipments of Containerized Grain to Asia



Source: Port Import Export Reporting Service (PIERS), *Journal of Commerce*

Contacts and Links

Contact Information

Coordinators

Surajudeen (Deen) Olowolayemo	surajudeen.olowolayemo@usda.gov	(202) 690-1328
Pierre Bahizi	pierre.bahizi@usda.gov	(202) 720-1378
Daniel Nibarger	daniel.nibarger@usda.gov	(202) 690-0152

Weekly Highlight Editors

Marina Denicoff	marina.denicoff@usda.gov	(202) 720-8264
Surajudeen (Deen) Olowolayemo	surajudeen.olowolayemo@usda.gov	(202) 690-1328
April Taylor	april.taylor@usda.gov	(202) 295-7374
Daniel Nibarger	daniel.nibarger@usda.gov	(202) 690-0152

Grain Transportation Indicators

Surajudeen (Deen) Olowolayemo	surajudeen.olowolayemo@usda.gov	(202) 690-1328
-------------------------------	--	----------------

Rail

Marvin Prater	marvin.prater@usda.gov	(202) 690-6290
Johnny Hill	johnny.hill@usda.gov	(202) 720-4211
Daniel Nibarger	daniel.nibarger@usda.gov	(202) 690-0152

Barge Transportation

Nicholas Marathon	nick.marathon@usda.gov	(202) 690-0331
April Taylor	april.taylor@usda.gov	(202) 295-7374

Truck Transportation

April Taylor	april.taylor@usda.gov	(202) 295-7374
--------------	--	----------------

Grain Exports

Johnny Hill	johnny.hill@usda.gov	(202) 720-4211
Marina Denicoff	marina.denicoff@usda.gov	(202) 720-8264

Ocean Transportation

Surajudeen (Deen) Olowolayemo (Freight rates and vessels)	surajudeen.olowolayemo@usda.gov	(202) 690-1328
April Taylor (Container rates)	april.taylor@usda.gov	(202) 295-7374

Subscription Information: Send relevant information to GTRContactUs@USDA.gov for an electronic copy (*printed copies are also available upon request*).

Related Websites

Ocean Rate Bulletin

[Ocean Rate Bulletin](#)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (Voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.