

A document prepared for
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

**Importer Clients
2006 Satisfaction Survey
Research Report**

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IMPORTER CLIENTS - SATISFACTION SURVEY FINDINGS

SURVEY SAMPLE

In total, 325 clients of AQIS Importer Client Services were contacted by telephone to participate in the Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2006. Of these, **262 clients** actually participated in the survey, giving an overall response rate of 81% - showing that there was a largely positive response to the survey among Importers.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Length of time dealing with AQIS

Three in five of the respondents who participated in the survey were long-time clients of AQIS (5 years or more) with two in five (40%) having dealt with AQIS for 10 years or more.

Overall, respondents in 2006 had dealt with AQIS for a slightly longer period than the survey sample of 2004. The proportion of respondents who had been dealing with AQIS for 5 years or more has increased in 2006 (from 50% in 2004 to 60% in 2006).

Length of time	% 2004 (N = 301) %	% 2006 (N = 262)
Less than 12 months	19	11
1 and less than 3 years	20	18
3 and less than 5 years	11	11
5-9 years	17	20
10 years or more	33	40
TOTAL	100	100

Types of products imported

Respondents were asked what types of products they imported. Of the variety of products mentioned, 28% of respondents (or almost 3 in 10) said they imported personal effects/home wares/furniture/household goods. The second most common product types to be imported were machinery (imported by one in five) followed by Frozen/Prepared fruit/vegetables/food (imported by one in six importers).

The 2004 and 2006 samples are similar with regard to the primary product type imported. However in 2006, Importers were more inclined to report importing Machinery/equipment (up by 10% since 2004, to 20% in 2006) and Frozen/Prepared fruit/vegetables/food (increased by 10%+ since 2004 to 17% in 2006).

Products imported	% 2006 (N = 262)
Personal effects/Home wares/Furniture/Household goods	28
Machinery/equipment	20
Frozen/Prepared fruit/vegetables/food	17
Seeds for sowing/nursery stock	13
Agricultural products	10
Fresh/Dried fruit and vegetables/cut flowers	10
Everything – wide/range of products	8
Wood/timber	7
Clothing/apparel/garments	6
Biological goods/samples/specimens	5
Live animals	5
Cars	5
Don't know	3
Fertilizer/stockfeed	3
Therapeutic goods	3
Fish products	3
Animal fibers/hides/skins/feathers	2
Live plants /flowers	2
Milk and egg product	1
Meat Products	1
Other	10

Note: The percentages in the above table add to more than 100% as respondents were able to specify more than one product type.

Number of Importer's consignments that were checked by AQIS in the last 12 months

Respondents were asked how many of their consignments had been checked by AQIS inspectors in the last 12 months. More than two in five (44%) Importer clients reported 50 or more of their consignments had been checked during this time while just under 3 in 10 (28%) reported that less than 10 of their consignments had been checked.

Overall, compared with 2004 (when 3 in 10 clients reported 50 or more of their consignments had been checked) 2006 Importer clients are having significantly more consignments checked by AQIS in the last 12 months.

Number of consignments checked in last 12 months	% 2006 (N = 262)
Less than 10	28
10-49	20
50 or more	44
Don't know	8
TOTAL	100

Regular AQIS contact office

Regular contact office	% 2006 (N = 262)
NSW- Sydney	34
Victoria – Melbourne	28
Queensland - Brisbane	23
Canberra	14
WA - Perth	10
SA - Adelaide	6
NSW- not Sydney	4
Queensland - Far North/Cairns/Townsville	3
Tas - Hobart	3
NT - Darwin	2
Victoria - not Melbourne	2
Queensland – South, not Brisbane	2

Regular contact office	% 2006 (N = 262)
Tas – not Hobart	2
WA - not Perth	1

Note: The percentages in the above table add to more than 100% as respondents were allowed to specify more than one office with which they have regular dealings.

The table above outlines the main AQIS offices with whom the clients liaise. Approximately a third of respondents report Sydney being a regular contact office and approximately one in four report Melbourne and Brisbane. Canberra and Perth follow next being contacted on a regular basis by one in seven and one in ten respectively. As expected, the main capital cities dominate as contact offices. In comparison to 2004 figures, more Importer clients reported regularly contacting the Brisbane office in 2006 (increased 7% since 2004 to 23%).

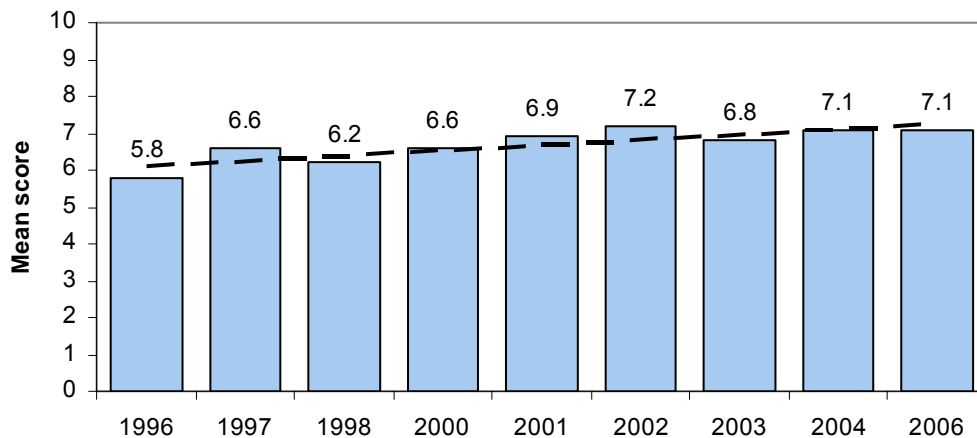
OVERALL SATISFACTION

Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the service provided by AQIS on a scale of 1 to 10 – 1 being 'extremely dissatisfied', and 10 being 'extremely satisfied'. **The majority of importers were satisfied with the service provided to them by AQIS, with 81% giving it a rating of 6 or more out of 10.** Only one in fifteen rated AQIS service as 3 or less out of 10.

Level of overall satisfaction with AQIS service (on a scale of 1-10)	% (N = 262)
1 (Extremely Dissatisfied)	1
2-5	18
6-9	73
10 (Extremely Satisfied)	8
TOTAL	100

Respondents' overall satisfaction with AQIS service was moderately high in 2006 and is consistent with levels reported in 2004. **Average overall satisfaction in 2006 was 7.1 (as it was in 2004).** As shown in the figure below there appears to be a slight positive trend over time which has levelled out in 2006.

Average rating of Overall Satisfaction with AQIS service



Consistency in satisfaction across AQIS offices

Consistent level of satisfaction?	% (N = 56)
Yes	57
No	38
Don't know	5
Total	100

The large majority of clients (79%) only dealt with one AQIS office in 2006. Those who dealt with more than one AQIS office (21% or 56 people), were asked if the level of satisfaction was consistent across offices. The table above indicates that about two in five respondents (38% or 21 from 56 people) who dealt with more than one office said they received different levels of service from different AQIS offices. These levels of consistency are similar to those reported in 2004.

Among those who said that satisfaction was inconsistent across offices, clients' rating of offices they were least satisfied with was relatively evenly spread across the major offices. The reasons provided by respondents for being least satisfied with one particular office varied and given the very small sample size (N=21) are not reported here.

Changes in overall satisfaction over the last two years

Reflecting the generally positive level of satisfaction, approximately a third of respondents (34%) said that their overall satisfaction had improved over the last two years. The largest proportion of clients (38%) said that they were as satisfied now, as they were two years ago. While a smaller yet notable proportion of clients reported deterioration in satisfaction (21%).

Change in overall satisfaction over last 2 years	% (N = 262)
Improved	34
Stayed the same	38
Deteriorated	21
Don't know	6
TOTAL	100

Note: Due to rounding, the table total does not add to 100%.

The proportion of respondents reporting a decrease in overall satisfaction has increased by 8% since the last survey. Only a small increase in the proportion of respondents reporting an increase in overall satisfaction occurred in the same time (up 3% since 2004).

Main factors contributing to *improvement* in satisfaction

Of those whose overall satisfaction had improved, the largest proportion (about 3 in 10 - 29%) said that they attributed this improvement to **improved efficiency**. Other significant proportions attributed this improvement to staff being more approachable and communicating with them better (about 1 in 5) and understanding their business and business needs (about 1 in 6).

In contrast to 2004, in 2006 significantly more respondents attributed improvement in overall satisfaction to improved efficiency (29% in 2006 compared with 7% in 2004).

Main factors contributing to <i>improvement</i>	% (N=90)
Improved efficiency	29
More approachable/better communication	19
Understand business/business needs	16
More contact/personal service	11
Staff are better trained/more knowledgeable and experienced	9
More professional	4
More helpful	4
Team approach/more flexible	2
Introduction of QA	2
Don't know	2
Other	1
TOTAL	101

Note: Due to rounding, the table total does not add to 100%.

Main factors contributing to *deterioration* in satisfaction

One in five Importers clients (54 people) reported that their overall satisfaction had deteriorated over the last two years. Of these, 32% (or 17 people) reported the 'level of staff knowledge/training' or the related factor 'inconsistent rule interpretation' as areas contributing to their decline in satisfaction with the service provided by AQIS. A further 18% (or 10 people) were dissatisfied with staff availability and/or staff numbers, and 13% (or 7 people) were dissatisfied with the level of professionalism.

The factors attributed to deterioration in overall satisfaction in 2006 are the same as those reported in 2004.

Main factors contributing to <i>deterioration</i>	% (N=56)
Lack of knowledge/specific knowledge/untrained staff	21
Not enough staff/ staff not available when need them	18
Unprofessional staff/service	13
Inconsistent rule interpretation	11
Don't understand business/our need/goals	9
Lack of staff continuity	9
Bureaucracy/inflexible/faceless	7
Cost	7
Introduction/implementation of QA	5
TOTAL	100

Changes that AQIS could make to improve levels of service

Respondents were asked (an open-ended question) about improvements that could be made to AQIS services. Considering the suggestions for improvement displayed in the table below, four themes emerge:

- ❖ **Improve staff training and knowledge levels -**
 - Better trained/more knowledgeable staff/specialist knowledge (17%)
 - Consistent rule interpretation (10%)
- ❖ **Improve efficiency and processing -**
 - More efficient/faster processing (20%)
 - More staff (13%)
- ❖ **Improve industry consultation/understanding**
 - More flexible/understanding (17%)
 - Improve understanding of business/my business (11%)
 - Adopt a team approach (9%)
- ❖ **Increase contact with clients and accessibility of information –**
 - More accessible/contactable (17%)
 - More information/updates (7%)
 - Better access to information/updates (5%)

Suggested changes to improve service	% (N = 262)
More efficient/faster processing	20
Better trained/more knowledgeable/specialist staff	17
More flexible/understanding	17
More accessible/contactable	17
More staff	13
Improve understanding of business/my business	11
Consistent rule interpretation	10
Adopt a team approach/work with us	9
More information/updates	7
Closer consultation with industry	7
Reduce fees/improve value for money	6
Better access to information/updates	5
More automated quarantine entry processing	3
Don't know	8
None/no improvements/no changes necessary	13

Note: Table does not total 100 as respondents were allowed to provide more than one suggestion for improvement.

These suggestions largely overlap with the ideas put forward by Importers in the 2004 survey. However, in 2004 there was a weaker emphasis on the four themes presented and a stronger emphasis on value for money.

The largest *increases* in client suggestions in comparison to 2004 were:

- ❖ AQIS being more accessible/contactable (up 12%);
- ❖ More efficient/faster processing (up 9%);
- ❖ More flexibility/understanding (up 8%);
- ❖ AQIS adopting a team approach (up 7%);
- ❖ Increasing consistent rule interpretation (up 6%); and
- ❖ Improving understanding of business/my business (up 6%).

The largest *decrease* concerned the proportion of clients suggesting AQIS reduce fees/improve value for money (down 6%).

Last, while one in eight (13%) respondents noted no changes or improvements were necessary in 2006, this figure was 18% in 2004.

SATISFACTION WITH AND IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC AQIS SERVICE ATTRIBUTES

Respondents were asked to rate (i) the importance of, and (ii) their satisfaction with nine attributes of AQIS service on a 1-10 scale (1 being 'not at all important/extremely dissatisfied', and 10 being 'extremely important/extremely satisfied').

Asking clients to rate how important they perceive particular attributes of AQIS service to be, enables AQIS to identify the needs of each client group, and to improve services to these groups. It is, in effect, developing a *client values framework* for each client group. By measuring client satisfaction against these values, AQIS can identify areas of service that are fulfilling clients' needs, or areas of service that need to be improved.

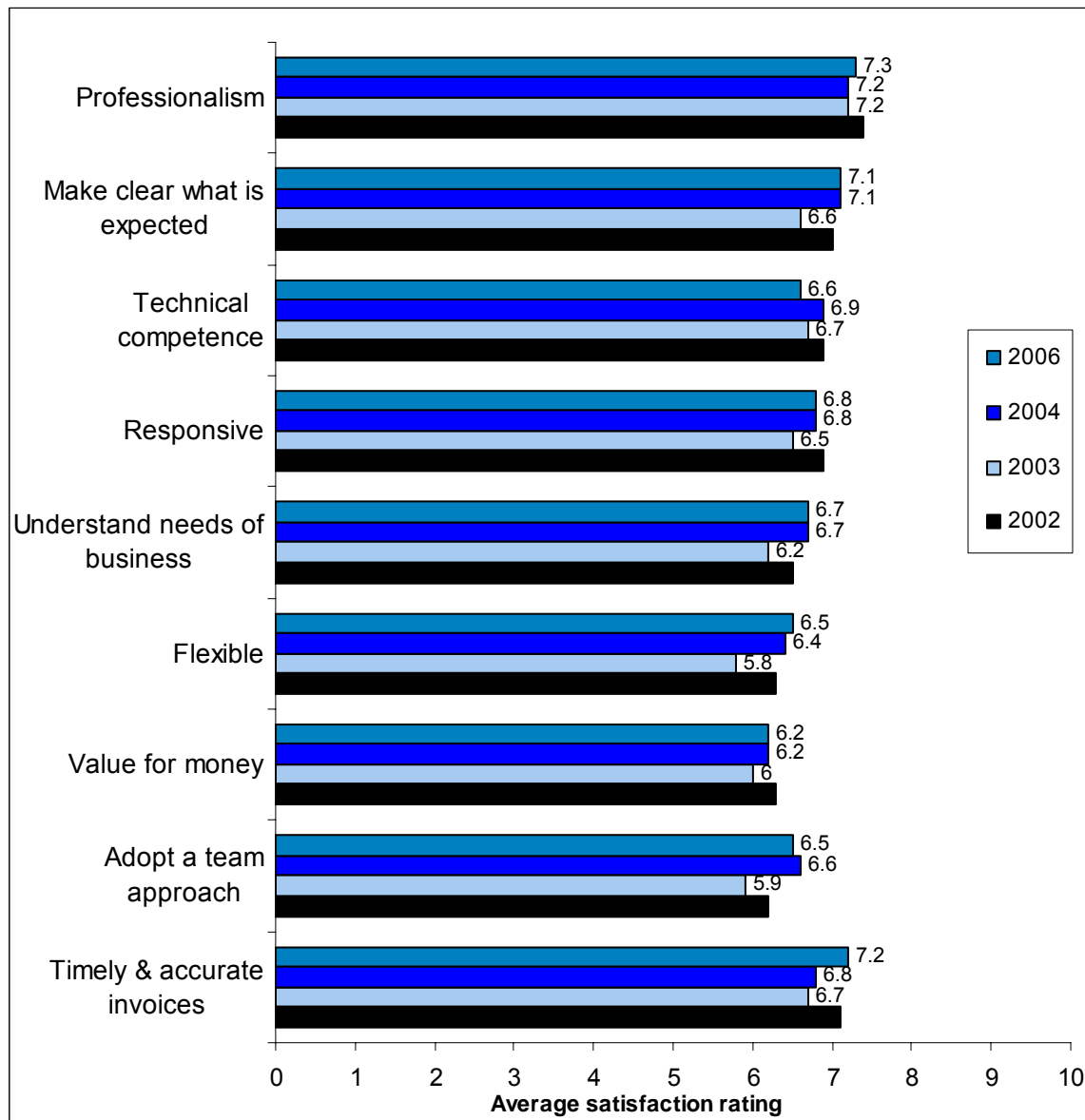
According to respondents, the three **most important attributes of AQIS service are staff professionalism, ensuring expectations are clear and being responsive to needs**. These service attributes received importance ratings of 8.8, 8.8 and 8.6 out of 10 respectively. Respondents gave these three attributes satisfaction ratings of 7.3, 7.1 and 6.8 out of 10. These were three of the top four satisfaction ratings, showing that AQIS Importer clients are most satisfied with the areas they consider most important.

The remaining six attributes were also rated as important – five of the six being rated above 8.0 out of 10.0. AQIS performed moderately on these attributes, with satisfaction ratings on these six attributes ranging from 6.2 to 7.2 out of 10.0.

Attribute of AQIS service	Average rating - Satisfaction	Average rating - Importance	Weighted Satisfaction Gap (i.e. 10 – Satisfaction X Importance)
Staff professionalism	7.3	8.8	24
Timely & accurate invoices	7.2	8.1	23
Expectations are clear	7.1	8.8	26
Responsive to needs	6.8	8.6	28
Understand needs of business	6.7	8.3	27
Staff technical competence	6.6	8.3	28
Adopting team approach	6.5	7.9	28
Flexible	6.5	8.1	28
Value for money	6.2	8.1	31

The figure below shows historical data for average satisfaction ratings. Satisfaction results have remained consistent between 2004 and 2006. Two changes were noted but were not statistically significant: an increase in satisfaction for the attribute concerning the provision of timely & accurate invoices and a decrease in satisfaction concerning staff technical competence. On the other hand, eight of the nine importance ratings have increased (six significantly so) since 2004, resulting in an increase in the gap between perceived importance and perceived performance (i.e., satisfaction).

Average satisfaction rating with attributes of AQIS service 2002 to 2006



To identify the AQIS service attributes with the most fertile room for improvement (i.e. where improvement would be most valued by clients) a client centred analysis approach was utilised taking into account both client perceived performance and client perceived importance.

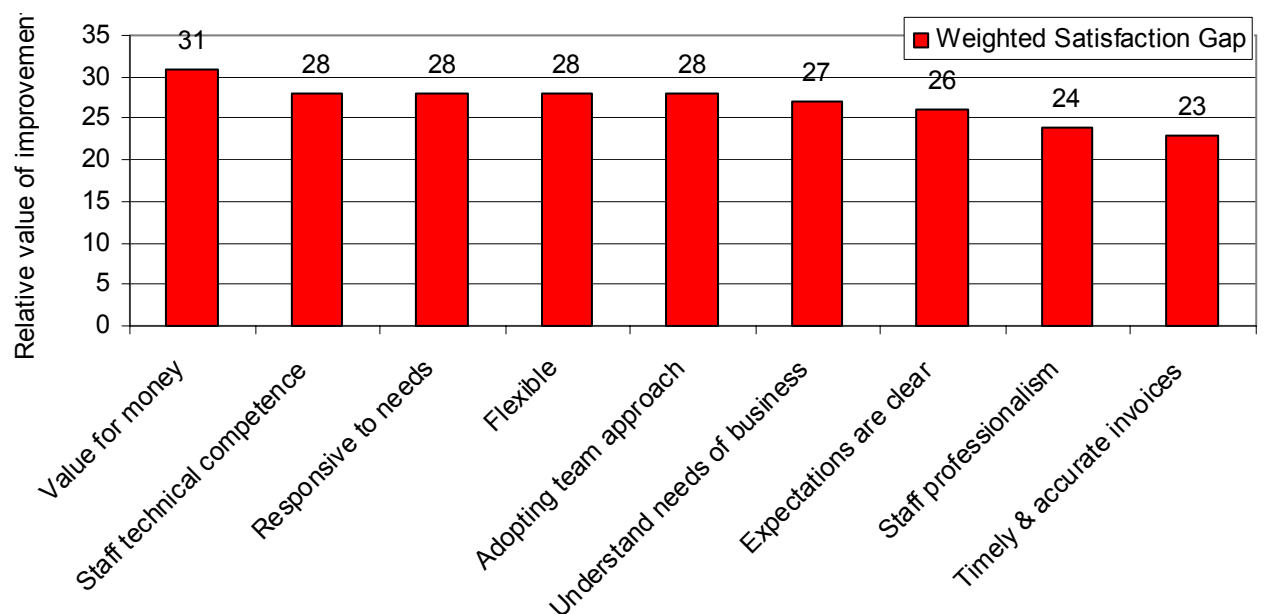
In summary, as presented in the last column of the table above we calculated the 'Importance Weighted Satisfaction Gap'. This figure is calculated by subtracting the 'Average Satisfaction Rating' from the

'Maximum Possible Satisfaction Rating' resulting in identification of the 'Satisfaction Gap' (a gap of zero would indicate a perfect satisfaction rating was recorded - i.e., 10 - 10 = 0, while a satisfaction gap of nine would indicate the lowest satisfaction rating - i.e., 10 - 1 = 9).

After calculating the Satisfaction Gap this figure was multiplied by the 'Average Importance Rating' providing an 'Importance Weighted Satisfaction Gap' as perceived by the client¹.

The Weighted Satisfaction Gap scores presented in the last column of the table above and in the figure below have a potential range from 1 to 90. **Higher scores indicate those service attributes which require most improvement from the point of view of improving overall client satisfaction.**

Relative value of improvement across the nine AQIS Service Attributes



The figure above illustrates the attributes, that if improved, will be most appreciated by clients in order of importance. There is a fair range in weighted satisfaction gap scores. However 7 of the 9 attributes with gap scores in excess of 25 if improved would likely improve overall satisfaction. **Identifying priorities for improvement** from the table and figures above, and incorporating the significant suggestions for improvement provided by Importer clients, **we recommend focusing on staff technical competence, responsiveness to needs (and related flexibility) and adopting a team approach (and related understanding needs of business)**. In general, as service was better in areas that were seen as more important by clients, the Importers client service area at AQIS understands client needs, knows what is important to this client group and generally provides it to them. What we recommend however is improved performance across the core areas specified.

Formula: (Maximum Possible Satisfaction Rating - Average Satisfaction Rating) × Average Importance Rating.

ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE AGAINST AQIS VALUES

Respondents were asked to rate 25 attributes of AQIS service provision, which represent five key values that underlie AQIS service standards. These values are as follows:

1. Professionalism of staff (6 attributes)	Doing the best job we can, serving out clients in a practical, diligent, rigorous and outcomes-focussed way;
2. Integrity of staff (3 attributes)	Behaving ethically, acting with honesty, loyalty and courage;
3. Openness of staff & the organisation (7 attributes)	Building trust, being frank, open to ideas, and accessible to staff and clients
4. Fairness of staff (7 attributes)	Ensuring that people get a fair go, that all are treated equitably and justly;
5. Respect of staff (2 attributes)	Respecting each other, our families, our clients, those with different ideas and those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Respondents were presented with 25 statements about the attributes, and were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a five-point agreement scale (with an additional 'don't know' option) as follows: 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly disagree.

Professionalism of staff

In total, professionalism of AQIS staff is rated average to high by Importer clients.

Three quarters of respondents agreed that AQIS staff are professional (78%). Just fewer than 7 in 10 Importer survey respondents (68%) agreed that AQIS staff are well trained while less than six in ten respondents agreed that:

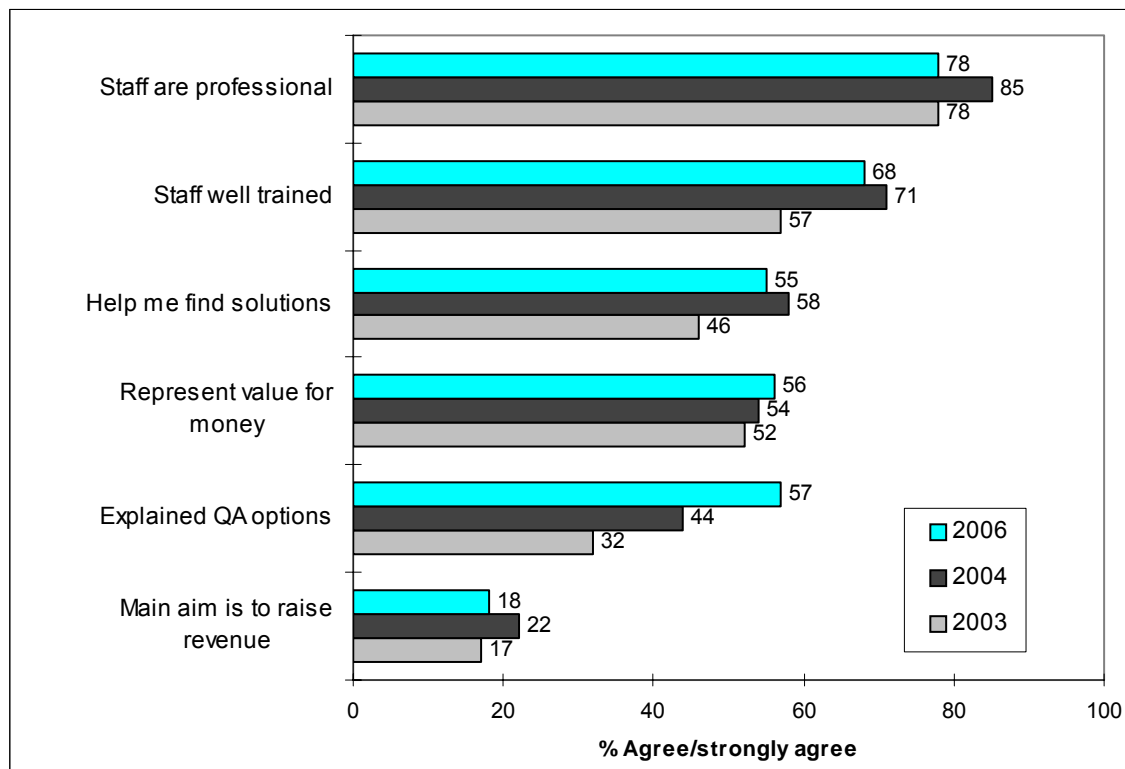
- AQIS helps them find solutions;
- the tasks AQIS performs are value for money; and
- AQIS staff adequately explained QA/CA/Co-regulation options.

Finally, the majority (68%) did not agree that AQIS's aim was to raise revenue. However a significant proportion (just under one in five – 18%) agreed that raising revenue is an AQIS aim.

Overall, staff professionalism indicator statements have remained consistent since 2004. The exceptions here are: a positive significant increase in agreement that AQIS staff adequately explained QA/CA/Co-regulation options - up 13% since 2004 to 57% - and a decrease in the proportion of clients who agree AQIS staff are professional - down by 7% since 2004 to 78%.

Professionalism statements	% Agree/ Strongly Agree	% Neither/ Don't know	% Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
Staff are professional	78	16	6
Staff well trained	68	17	15
Helps me find solutions	55	24	21
Tasks AQIS performs are value for money	56	16	28
Adequately explained QA/CA/Co-reg optns	57	19	24
Aim of AQIS is to raise revenue	18	14	68

Ratings of Staff Professionalism: 2003 - 2006



Integrity of staff

Respondents' ratings of staff Integrity were moderate to high in 2006.

Less than 6 in 10 (56%) Importer clients agree with the statement that staff interpret rules & regulations consistently. Agreement has decreased significantly since 2004 (by 8%, while disagreement increased by 10%).

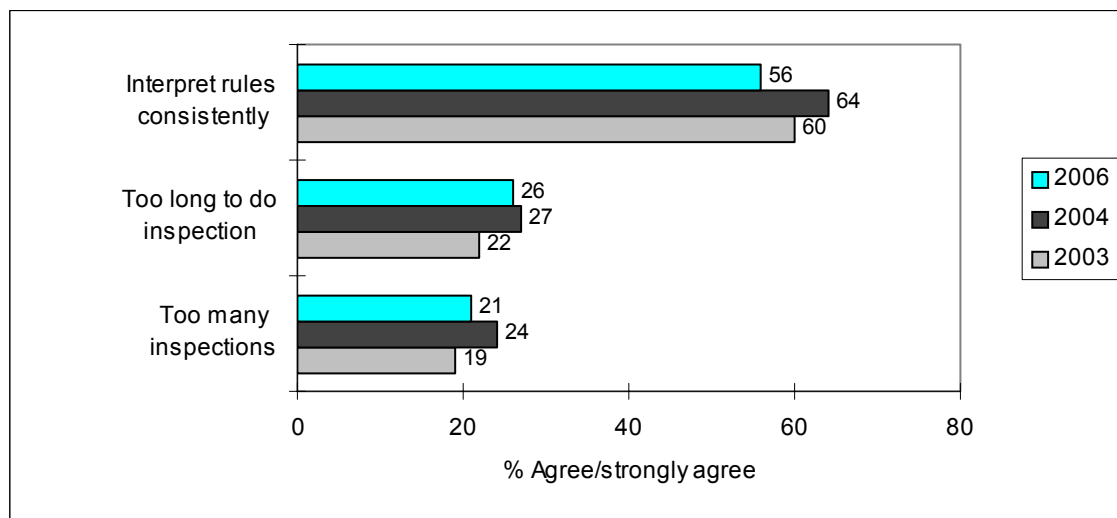
It is recommended that the AQIS Client Service Area attempt to improve the consistency with which AQIS staff interpret rules and regulations and or the perception of Importer clients in this regard.

Perception concerning whether AQIS conducts too many inspections or takes too long to do inspections remained relatively unchanged and positive:

- ◇ Three in five disagreed that staff take too long to do inspection; and
- ◇ Three in five disagreed that staff do too many inspections.

Integrity statements	% Agree/Strongly Agree	% Neither/Don't know	% Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Staff interpret rules & regulations consistently	56	11	33
Staff take too long to do inspection	26	15	59
Too many inspections	21	19	60

Ratings of Staff Integrity in 2003 - 2006



Openness of staff and of the organisation

The openness of AQIS staff, and the organisation as a whole, was rated satisfactorily by Importer clients. Two thirds of clients or more agreed that:

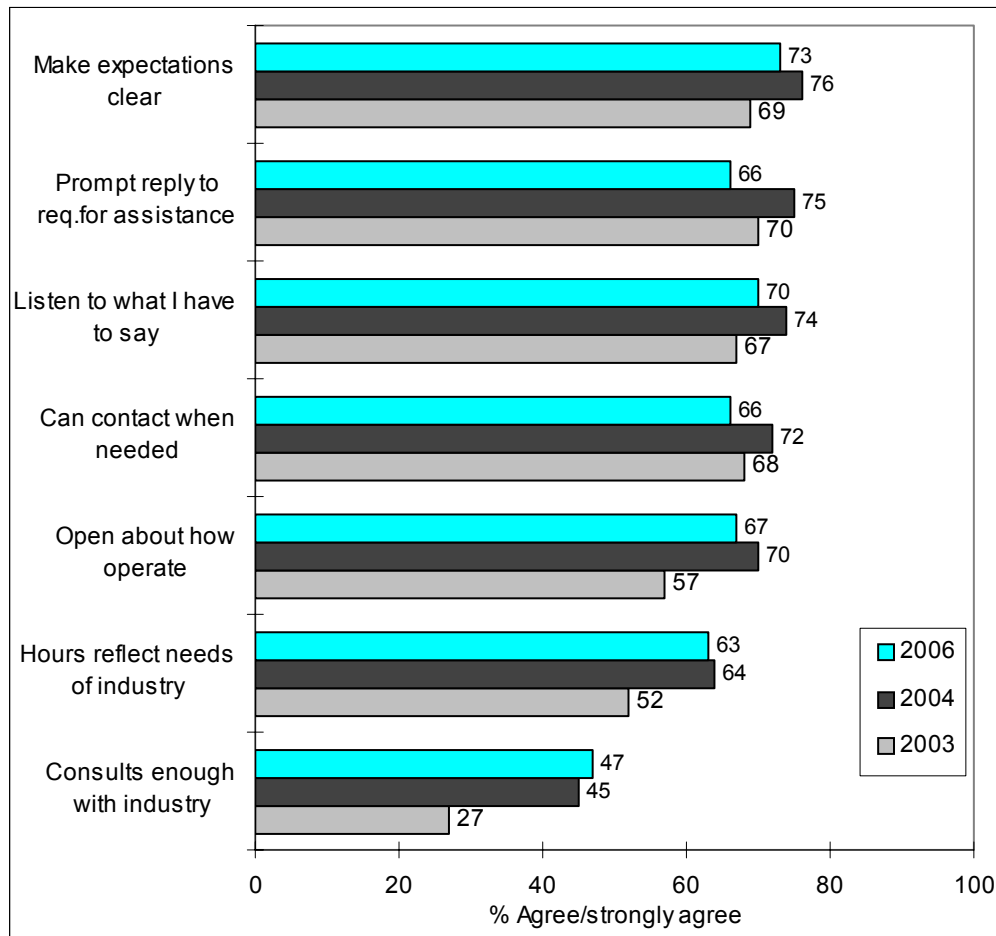
- ◇ AQIS's expectations are clear (73%);
- ◇ AQIS staff listen to them (70%);
- ◇ AQIS is open about how they operate (67%);
- ◇ They can contact AQIS when needed (66%) (24% disagreed), and
- ◇ Their requests for assistance are promptly dealt with (66%).

In comparison to the last survey (i.e., 2004) (while not statistically significant) ratings have decreased slightly across six of the seven openness attributes. The largest declines have taken place in response to:

- Can contact AQIS when needed (agreement decreased by 8%);
- Hours of operation reflect needs (disagreement increased 7%); and
- Consults enough with industry (disagreement increased by 11%).

Openness statements	% Agree/ Strongly Agree	% Neither/ Don't know	% Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
Respond promptly to requests for assistance	66	17	17
Expectations are clear	73	13	15
Can contact AQIS when needed	66	10	24
Listens	70	18	12
Open about how they operate	67	18	15
Hours of operation reflect needs	63	9	28
Consults enough with industry	47	25	28

Ratings of Staff Openness in 2003 - 2006



Fairness of staff

Overall, Importers' perception of staff fairness was moderate with approximately half the respondents indicating that they agree AQIS makes a positive contribution to their business success and also takes the needs of their business into account. Further two thirds of respondents agreed that AQIS responds promptly to requests for information. Room for improvement remains to further raise these levels.

Only one in four agreed that AQIS should devote more time to assistance (as opposed to policing). More than half disagreed and just over a third agreed that AQIS applies rules and regulations too strictly (almost half disagreed).

Fairness items concerning charges and costs were also viewed moderately by Importer clients:

- ❖ Just less than half of Importer clients (46%) agree that charge rates are too high while only three in ten disagree; and
- ❖ The majority disagreed that industry should meet all of AQIS's costs (61% disagreed and 22% agreed).

Compared to 2004 results, three shifts were significant (2 negative, 1 positive). On the positive side:

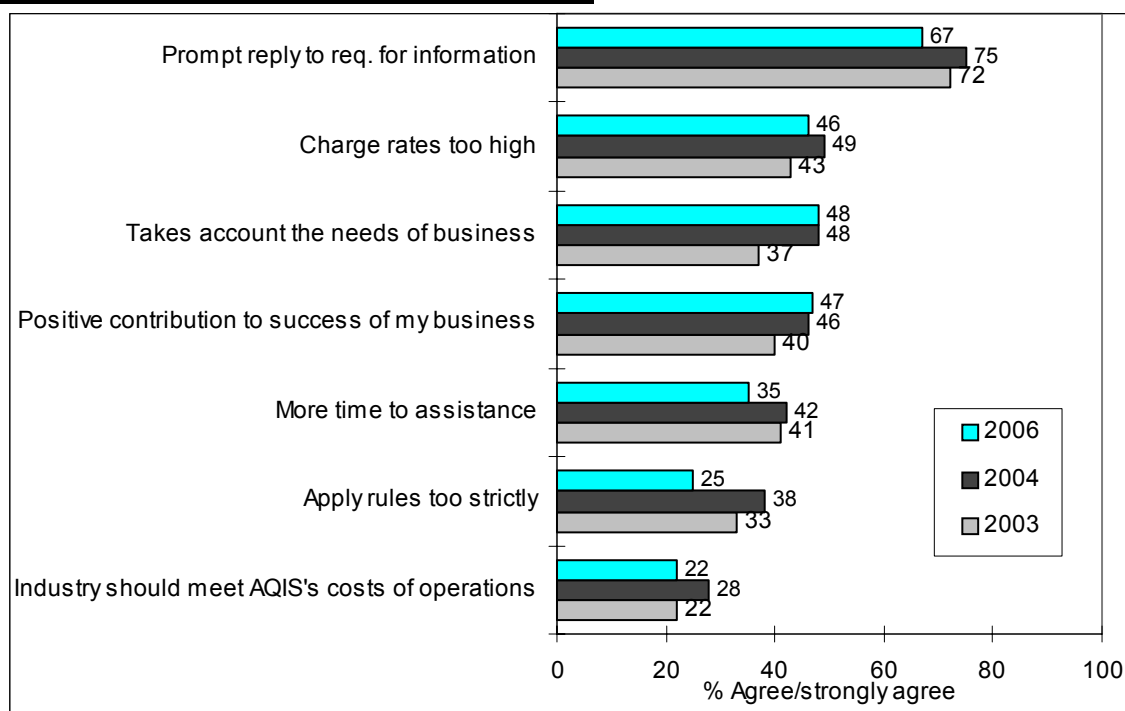
- ◇ Agreement that staff apply rules & regulations too strictly decreased significantly by 7% and disagreement increased by 10%).

And on the negative side:

- ◇ The proportion of clients that agree AQIS responds promptly to requests for information decreased significantly by 8%); and
- ◇ The proportion of clients that disagree that industry should meet all of AQIS's cost increased by 15%.

Fairness statements	% Agree/Strongly Agree	% Neither/Don't know	% Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Responds promptly to requests for information	67	16	17
Charge rates too high	46	24	30
Should devote more time to assistance/less to policing/regulating	35	21	44
Makes positive contribution to business success	47	25	28
Take needs of business into account	48	22	30
Staff apply rules & regulations too strictly	25	21	54
Industry should meet all of AQIS's costs	22	17	61

Ratings of Staff Fairness in 2003 - 2006



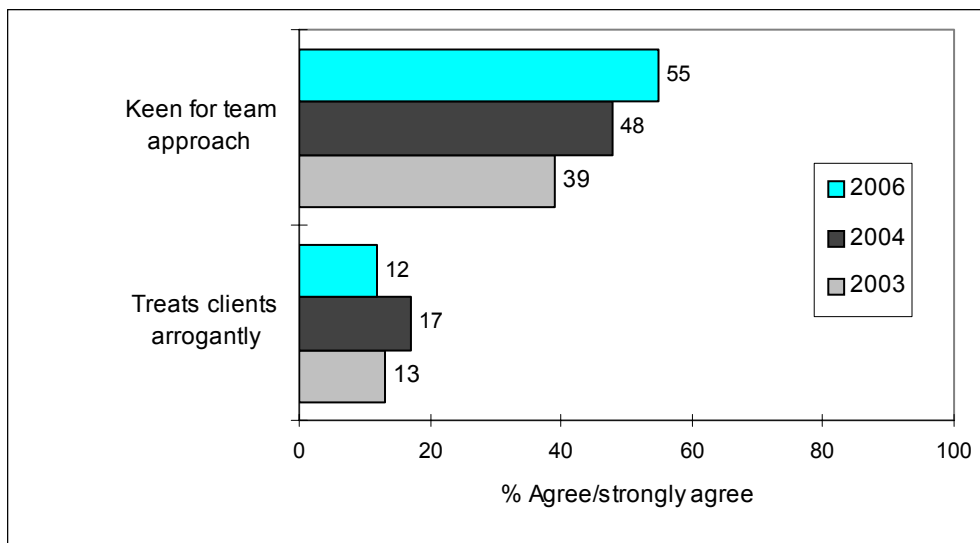
Respect

Generally, respondents rated AQIS staff respect moderate to high. Around 3 in 4 *disagreed* that AQIS staff treat their clients arrogantly (76%). The percentage of those who agreed with this statement remained low and decreased slightly since 2004 (down by 5% to 12%).

Just over half (55%) of Importer respondents agreed that AQIS is keen to develop a team approach with the industry and this proportion has increased (though not significantly) by 7% since the last survey and by 16% since 2003.

Respect statements	% Agree/ Strongly Agree	% Neither/ Don't know	% Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
Treats clients arrogantly	12	12	76
Keen to develop team approach	55	29	16

Ratings of Staff Respect in 2003 - 2006



BROAD AQIS ISSUES

Primary role and function of AQIS

Primary role & function of AQIS	% (N = 262)
Protect Australia from incoming pests/diseases	66
Monitor quality of imports	12
Ensure compliance	8
Responsible for regulations	5
Facilitate/administer imports	3
Control/inspections of Imports/Exports NFI	2
Monitor quality of exports	2
Facilitate/administer exports	2
TOTAL	100

Results regarding the perceived primary role of AQIS are similar to 2004 figures. Hence the overall majority view of AQIS remains unchanged – in 2006 two thirds of clients believe the primary role and function of AQIS is to protect Australia from incoming pests/diseases. The next most popular opinion reported by 1 in 8 was to monitor the quality of imports.

Value of AQIS Label

Value of AQIS label	% (N = 262)
High value	20
Some value only	12
Low value	5
No value at all	7
Don't know/Depends	6
Not involved in exports	50
TOTAL	100

Respondents were asked, "If you are involved in export in any way, how much value if any do you see in having an AQIS label on or AQIS clearance of your products when it comes to accessing overseas markets?" Among those to whom the question applies (i.e., exporters), **almost two thirds (64%) felt that the AQIS label *does* add high or at least some value.** While not significant the perceived value of the AQIS label has increased slightly since 2004 when 57% of those to whom the question applied felt that the AQIS label *does* add high or at least some value.

FEEDS/CHARGES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

Rating value for money of AQIS services

Rating of value for money (on a scale of 1 – 10)	% (N = 262)
1 (Very poor value for money)	4
2-5	30
6-9	58
10 (Very good value for money)	8
TOTAL	100

When asked to rate value for money of AQIS services on a 1-10 scale, the majority of respondents (66%) rated the charges relative to value as a '6' or higher. In fact, the overall mean on the 10-point scale was **6.3** - that is towards "good value for money". The perception of value for money has improved since 2004 (bordering statistical significance) when the average rating was 6.0.

AQIS charges changed in the last 12 months?

Changes to AQIS charges?	% (N = 262)
Increased	31
Stayed the same	34
Decreased	4
Both increased and decreased	3
Don't know	28
TOTAL	100

Reports concerning changes in AQIS charges over the last 12 months have remained unchanged since 2004. Three in ten (31%) respondents reported increases in AQIS charges in 2006 compared with 30% in 2004. Likewise, approximately a third of Importer client respondents in both 2004 and 2006 reported charges had stayed the same. Only 5% and 4% of 2004 and 2006 survey respondents reported charges had decreased.

On a positive note, despite three in ten (31%) Importer client respondents reporting increased charges over the last year compared with four percent reporting a decrease, perceived value for money has increased since 2004 as reported above (i.e., from 6.0 in 2004 to 6.3 in 2006).

AQIS SERVICE CHARTER

Awareness of AQIS Service Charter

Aware of AQIS Service Charter	% (N = 262)
Yes	9
No	87
Can't say	4
TOTAL	100

Respondents were asked whether or not they were aware that AQIS has a Service Charter. Only about 1 in 10 Importer clients (9%) was aware of the Charter in 2006. This proportion has decreased significantly since 2004 when 20% was aware of the charter.

It is apparent that if AQIS wants Importer clients to be aware of the charter the Client Service Area needs to communicate more consistently with clients about the AQIS Service Charter.

Awareness of Service Standards in the Charter

Of the 9% of Importer clients that were aware of the Charter, approximately half were aware of the actual service standards in the document.

Awareness of Service Standards in the Charter	% (N = 23)
Yes	48
No	43
Don't know	9
TOTAL	100

How often Service Standards are met

All clients were then read out three of the service standards contained within the Service Charter and asked to state to what extent AQIS had met each standard over the last 12 months.

How often Service Standard met	"Replies to your correspondence within 20 working days of receipt with an answer to your query or at least letting you know when you can expect an answer" (N = 262)	"Answers your telephone calls or messages promptly during normal office hours" (N = 262)	"Responds to your requests for printed information within 5 working days of receipt" (N = 262)
Always	62	47	47
Often	14	19	20
Sometimes	11	18	11
Rarely	3	8	2
Never	1	5	3
Don't know	10	4	18
TOTAL	100	100	100

How often Service Standard met	“Replies to your correspondence within 20 working days of receipt with an answer to your query or at least letting you know when you can expect an answer” (N = 262)	“Answers your telephone calls or messages promptly during normal office hours” (N = 262)	“Responds to your requests for printed information within 5 working days of receipt” (N = 262)
Always + Often			
2004	78	70	65
2006	76	66	67

The table above shows the likelihood of AQIS meeting the three service standards remained relatively unchanged since 2004:

- Three quarters of Importer clients said that AQIS always or often *replies to correspondence within 20 working days of receipt* with ‘an answer to a query or at least to let you know when you can expect an answer’;
- Two thirds of Importers said AQIS always or often ‘*Answers telephone calls or messages promptly* during normal office hours’; and
- Two thirds of Importers said AQIS ‘responds to their *requests for printed information* within 5 working days of receipt’.

In regards to **answering telephone calls**, **three in ten** (31%) of Importers reported this standard was only sometimes, rarely or never met over the last 12 months. **Performance in this area needs to be addressed by the Importers Client Service Area.**

It is noted that the proportion of respondents saying that they ‘don’t know’ whether AQIS ‘replies to correspondence’ and ‘responds to requests for printed information’ was 10% and 18% respectively in 2006. If we utilise responses only from respondents who provide an answer other than ‘don’t know’, in other words utilise responses only from those for whom the question was applicable, the extent to which AQIS meets each standard is actually higher. The data show that the frequency for meeting the two standards (when based only on clients who could answer the question) was actually 84% for ‘replies to correspondence...’ and 82% for ‘responds to requests for printed information’. Both of these are positive high achievement ratings.

INDUSTRY CONSULTATION

Awareness of Peak Industry Organisations that consult with AQIS

In 2006, over a third of Importers (36%) were aware of Peak Industry Organisations that consult with AQIS to represent their interests. This figure has increased by 13% since 2004.

Awareness of Peak Industry Organisations	% (N = 262)
Yes	36
No	63
Can't say	1
TOTAL	100

Awareness of Industry Organisations was higher among importers who had been dealing with AQIS for longer. For instance, 15% of Importers who had been dealing with AQIS for less than three years were aware compared to 24% of those dealing with AQIS for the last 3 to 9 years and 62% of importers dealing with AQIS for 10 or more years.

Membership of Peak Industry Organisations

Of those Importers who were aware of peak industry organisations representing their interests, the majority (72%) were current members of this peak body. Since the 2004 survey the proportion of respondents reporting membership has increased 11%.

Currently a member of peak industry body	% (N = 95)
Yes	72
No	28
TOTAL	100

AQIS PRODUCTS

AQIS Bulletin

Receive AQIS Bulletin	% (N = 262)
Yes	27
No	72
Don't know	1
TOTAL	100

The proportion of Importers reporting to receive the AQIS Bulletin is similar to 2004 levels – up slightly by 4% to 27%. Importers who had been dealing with AQIS for less than three years were less likely to receive the AQIS bulletin (only 10% received the bulletin) compared to those who had been dealing with AQIS for more than three years (34%).

Amongst those who do receive it, readership of the Bulletin was high: 76% of those who do receive it read every edition and a further 14% read it every few months. Furthermore, most of those who receive it also read most of it: 71% read half or more of the Bulletin.

Finally, most of those who receive it (73%) judge it to be useful:

- ❖ 24% say it is very useful; and
- ❖ 49% say somewhat useful.
- ✘ 24% say it is of little use.

Website visitation

Four in five (79%) Importer clients reported visiting the website. This is 12% more than that reported in 2004. Clearly, the web is an increasingly important way of reaching Importer clients.

While only 10% of Importers who had been dealing with AQIS for less than three years reported receiving the AQIS Bulletin, 75% of these relatively new Importers reported having visited the AQIS website. These figures demonstrate the reach, potential value and usage of the website - a means to distribute information to newer clients who are less likely to receive (or even be aware of) the Bulletin.

Have you visited the AQIS website	% (N = 262)
Yes	79
No	21
TOTAL	100

Just over two in five of those who have visited the website (63%) do so at least monthly:

- ❖ 12% visit daily
- ❖ 17% visit weekly;
- ❖ 34% visit monthly;
- ❖ 27% visit only once or twice a year; and
- ❖ 7% only visit if they know there's something new there.

The vast majority of those who visit the website (89%) also judge it to be useful:

- ❖ 50% say it is very useful; and
- ❖ 39% say somewhat useful.
- ✗ Only 8% feel the website is of little use.

Finally, those who visited the AQIS website were asked which areas they regularly visit. The answers are outlined below and show that website usage is varied and concerns a number of issues/topics. Of notable proportion, one in four Importer respondents report regularly visiting the AQIS website area concerning the icon/database.

❖ Icon/database	25%
❖ Rules/regulations/restrictions	14%
❖ Forms/guidelines	12%
❖ Plants/grains/horticulture	10%
❖ Food	9%
❖ Live animals/reproductive material	7%
❖ Import conditions/schemes/information	5%
❖ General Information/browsing	4%
❖ Publications/notices/reports/updates	4%
❖ Permits/permit application	4%
❖ Timber/wood packaging	3%
❖ Fumigation rules/requirements	3%
❖ Treatment providers	2%
❖ Quarantine information	2%

❖ Training/courses	2%
❖ Biological products.....	1%
❖ Machinery	1%
❖ Shipping vessels.....	1%
❖ Cargo	1%
❖ Other.....	7%
❖ Don't know	9%

Note: The percentages above add to more than 100% as respondents were allowed to specify more than one area of the website regularly visited.

SPECIAL INTEREST ISSUES

Consideration of using a QA/Compliance Agreement system

Respondents were asked if they would use a Quality Assurance/Co-regulation or Compliance system, if it were an option, rather than a product inspection system. Just over half of the respondents (56%) said that they would and a significant proportion (28%) said they were unsure about this option. These figures are similar to those reported in 2004.

Consider using a QA/Co-regulation Compliance Agreement system?	% (N = 262)
Yes	56
No	16
Don't know	28
TOTAL	100

Import clearance service

Three agree/disagree statements were presented to Importer clients about AQIS's import clearance services.

Import clearance service statements	% Agree/ Strongly Agree	% Neither/ Don't know	% Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
Whole service needs to be better integrated between Quarantine, Imported Food Inspection Program and Customs	70	17	13
Whole service is well organised electronically	51	17	32
Makes no allowance for importers with good inspection records	45	29	26

The table above reveals that the majority of import clients agree the whole process needs greater integration between AQIS, ACS and IFIP – this was agreed upon by 70% of respondents. Just over half of the Importers surveyed (51%) believe the whole service is well organised electronically (however almost one third disagree with this statement) and just over two in five agree that AQIS makes *no* allowance for importers with good inspection records.

In addition to the moderate ratings, negative changes are noted in two of the three import clearance service items since the last survey (one significant):

- There has been a **significant increase in disagreement that the service is well organised electronically** (disagreement up 16 % since 2004); and
- While non-significant there has been an increase (up 8%) in agreement with the view that the whole service needs to be better integrated.

While there has also been an increase in agreement that AQIS makes no allowance for importers with good track records (up 7%) disagreement also increased (up by 10%) neutralising the overall change.

CLIENT COMMENTS

Importer clients were given the opportunity to supply an additional comment at the end of the survey and 26% did so. The comments were either suggestions for improvement, criticism or praise for the current AQIS situation and are summarised below. Of the Importer clients who provided a comment, 1 in 7 or more remarked:

- ❖ AQIS needs faster processing (up 19% since 2004 to 23%);
- ❖ Need more staff/more regional staff (up 7% to 16%); and
- ❖ Need more awareness of the market place (up 16% to 16%)

In addition, one in ten or more also remarked:

- ❖ AQIS needs to be more flexible (up 7% to 12%);
- ❖ AQIS needs more accessible staff/instead of answering machine (up 7% to 12%);
- ❖ AQIS needs more consistent rule interpretation;
- ❖ Work with industry/closer consultation/partnership; and
- ❖ Fees are too high/need flexible fee structure.

While comments were only provided by a minority (approximately one in four of Importer clients surveyed in 2006) they are concentrated around three core issues:

- Staff availability/efficiency/competence;
- Industry consultation/awareness/understanding; and
- Flexibility.

These issues in part overlap the specific AQIS service attributes identified as requiring improvement. To reiterate, in order to further increase client satisfaction levels, we recommend the AQIS Importer Client Service Division focus on improving:

- **Efficiency and staff technical competence;**
- **Responsiveness to needs and related flexibility; and**
- **Adopting a team approach (and related understanding of business).**

All comments reported are presented in the table below. These points have all been covered in various sections of the current report and indicate that all relevant aspects considered important to Importer clients have been examined in this survey.

Additional comments made by Importers clients	% (N = 69)
Faster processing/faster turn round time/takes too long for items to get through	23
More staff/more regional staff	16
Need more awareness of the market place	16
AQIS needs more consistent rule interpretation	12
Positive comment – Happy/doing a good job	12
Be more flexible/less bureaucratic	12
Need more accessible staff/instead of answering machine	12
Positive comment – Happy doing a good job	12
Fees are too high/need flexible fee structure	10
Work with industry/closer consultation/partnership	10
Don't understand business/my business	9
More/better/less confusing guidelines	7
Room to improve	7
Staff need better training/ specialist staff	6
Other negative comments	6
Need to improve communication/are not informed of changes	4
Positive comment – Good service/professional/excellent customer service	4
Improve electronic information/computer systems	3
Other	3

Note: The percentages in the above table add to more than 100% as respondents were able to provide more than one comment.