The first crop of Australian wheat was sown at the Botanic Gardens in Sydney shortly after the arrival of the colonists in January 1788. The First Fleet had brought several types of grain with them, not knowing what might grow successfully in the new country, and the Gardens were set up to farm these grains experimentally.

The first harvests were disappointing. The harsh climate, poor soils and the lack of farming knowledge shown by the convicts meant that the young colony almost starved in the first few years. As early as May 1788, Governor Phillip was sending disheartening reports back to England:

“The great labour in clearing the ground will not permit more than eight acres to be sown this year with wheat and barley. At the same time the immense number of ants and field-mice will render our crops very uncertain.”
Governor Phillip, 15/5/1788, H.R.A. I, 1, pp. 19-23

James Ruse, a First Fleet convict, was considered the father of the Australian wheat industry. He was an experienced farmer and when his sentence expired he requested a land grant at Rose Hill near Parramatta. When his wheat crop was successful, Governor Phillip rewarded him with a 30 acre land grant which Ruse named Experiment Farm.
Volume 01: Production and resources of the northern and western districts of New South Wales, 1854 [ca. 1850-1857] - Mill at Mount Mitchell, County of Gresham, District of New England
From these early beginnings, wheat became Australia’s most important crop. The mid-19th century saw a huge increase in the area of land under cultivation – new colonies opened up (Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia were particularly important in terms of wheat production), and the gold rushes in New South Wales and Victoria encouraged inland settlement and the creation of efficient transportation systems, including road, rail and river.

Australian wheat exports began in 1845, but were not regular until the 1870s. New land clearing methods allowed large tracts of land to be cleared more efficiently – this included the invention of the iconic ‘stump jump’ plough.
With the success of the wheat harvests, flour mills began to spring up around the country. By the 1870s, many large country towns had their own mills, with around 500 mills producing flour across the country. Flour exports were an important part of the wheat industry until around the 1930s. After the Second World War, many of Australia’s export partners (which were mainly in the developing nations of Asia) began setting up their own flour industries and the Australian product was no longer in demand.

By the early 20th century, experimentation by William Farrer with new varieties of wheat had resulted in hardier, pest and rust resistant crops. This, and increasing farm mechanization in the years following the Second World War, led to wheat becoming Australia’s single most valuable agricultural product. The establishment of the Australian Wheat Board in 1939 also helped to boost the industry during a drop in prices in the 1930s. The AWB is still the sole bulk exporter of Australian wheat. This ‘single desk’ system is designed to ensure that Australian wheat producers receive consistent returns on their product.

Wheat now generates around 4 billion dollars in export revenue annually and is a major source of Australian agricultural employment.

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Series 03: Harvesting, ca. 1921-1924
Flour bag labels

This unique collection includes a range of individual designs for flour bag labels which have been screen printed onto separate sheets, and represent the 'trade mark' graphics of approximately seventeen companies. Many of the designs feature both the company and brand name, while others include only the brand. Some the prints also incorporate the destination of the product, including Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Bangkok and Glasgow. These designs date from before World War II and may have been test prints prior to production of the bags.


The brand names include: Aeroplane, Ang Maya, Banana, Bandoda, Bat, BBB, Bittern, Blue Bird, Buffalo, Bull, Butterfly, Canary, Carriage, Chedi, Commander, Condesa, Crane, Dice, Double Arrow, Dreadnought, Elephant, Escutchion, Fan, Fighting Cock, Flag Green, Flamingo, Fruit Basket, Girl & Dragon, Goat, Gold Plate, Golden
Eagle, Golden Green Arch, Gum, Guardian, Hand, Harvest Girl, Haystack, Jai-Alai, Jonquil, Junk, Key, Kris and Sheath, La Paz, La Dormeuse, Light, Lion, Lotus, Moon, Old Mill, Orchid, Oveco, Palm Tree, Parachute, Peony Flower, Prawn and Dragon, Puritan, Racehorse, Red Giraffe, Relief, San Toy, Santa Baguio, Scythe, Sea King, Silver Shield, Silvester's (Red Fern Mild Cured Bacon), Stag, Stork, Sydney Milling Company, (Bakers Boy), Tjap Ketoprak, Thevada, Three Finches, Zodiac, Triangle, Tuberose, Two Boys, Warbler, Warship, Waterfall, Wise Bros (Purity - 2 designs) and Yacht.
HONG KONG

AUSTRALIAN

FRUIT

BRAND

49 LBS.
GROSS WEIGHT WHEN PACKED
(22.23 KILOS.)

FLOUR

製洲澳

9
47 LBS.
GROSS WEIGHT WHEN PACKED
SYDNEY
城 棋
號 茂 捷
E.G. BARKER
FINEST
AUSTRALIAN
WHITE WHEAT FLOUR
車 高 城 鈴
CARRIAGE BRAND
SOLE IMPORTERS
CHIAT MOH
PENANG
Australian wheat
Published on State Library of NSW (https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)
Australian wheat
Published on State Library of NSW (https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)

[Collection of flour bag label prints] [picture], (*type*: "image", *clickUrl": "https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au [3]*


**Digital ID**: a4228072

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MOON

BEST AUSTRALIAN FLOUR
MILLED EXPRESSLY FOR
A.B. MOULDER & CO LTD
HONG KONG CHINA
Australian wheat
Published on State Library of NSW (https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)

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HIAP BIE COY. LTD.
MEDAN

BEST AUSTRALIAN
ROLLER FLOUR

THREE
FINCHES

PACKED BY:
BRUNTON & COMPANY, PTY LTD
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

22.68K.G. (50LBS) CROSS WEIGHT WHEN PACKED
This story has been developed with the support of the State Library of NSW Foundation.

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Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation


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