



Grunt for grain: Craig Mostyn piggery managers Jorge Chorréz, left, and John Kopriva with a herd of piglets. Picture: Bill Hatto

Low grain price saves piggeries' bacon

SARAH QUINTON

WA's pig producers are reaping the rewards of low grain prices and greater farmgate returns after a bumper recovery of the industry.

Twelve months ago, the WA pork industry suffered a mass exodus of farmers as high grain prices and low farmgate returns meant pig farm numbers fell from 360 to 160 in 2009.

In a fortunate turnaround for the remaining pig producers in the State, grain prices have almost halved since

this time last year, meaning farmers spend less on inputs while meat prices remain high.

Meanwhile, pork consumers have been assured of stable ham and pork prices over Christmas and the upcoming Chinese New Year, despite a fall in supply from producers, which would usually drive up prices.

Perth Pork Centre general manager Ron Penn said total supply was down 15 per cent from last year, but prices would not rise sharply to cover the shortfall in total value.

"Prices may go up slightly, but only by one or two per cent, which is the normal rise for this time of year," he said.

"Farmers have had an excellent year and we hope that prices will remain high for them well into 2010."

WA's biggest pig abattoir Craig Mostyn Group CEO David Lock said consumer demand for pork meat had risen as slaughter numbers fell.

"We would like to see volume grow by 10 per cent as growers increase investment and herd sizes," he said.