National Farmers Federation

TRADE

Policy Position

Government must maintain its commitment to completing trade agreements, with agriculture being at the heart of each agreement. Beyond tariff reductions, the Government must ensure it actively works to resolve non-tariff barriers that have a tangible impact on market access.

Government must provide robust frameworks and adequately resource biosecurity and food safety systems to protect Australia's reputation as a supplier of premium quality, clean, safe and environmentally sustainable food and fibre.

Government must advocate commercially meaningful multilateral liberalisation of agricultural trade and vigorously pursue Australia's interests in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Issue

The NFF is of the firm view that agricultural trade needs to be free and liberalised and distortions such as tariffs, subsidies and other technical market access barriers should be removed. Australia's agricultural sector is unique: In contrast to almost all OECD countries, Australia provides no trade distorting measures, little in the way of subsidies and the sector relies on a free and open trading environment to ensure on going profitability and sustainable growth.

Australian origin produce has an outstanding food safety reputation due to high biosecurity standards that have helped contribute to a largely pest and disease-free status. Australia must protect and build on our existing science-based biosecurity regime.

Background

The NFF remains dedicated to opening new export market opportunities for Australian agricultural produce and reducing distortions in global trade, including eliminating all food related tariffs and quotas and introducing much tighter disciplines on domestic supports. Given the Australian food and fibre industry's heavy reliance on international trade it is critically important that government continue to work with industry to maximise Australia's trade opportunities under the current international trade architecture.

While the range of completed agreements provide major improvements, Australian goods still face technical barriers to trade such as certification issues and protocol delays. These technical barriers can seriously undermine trade agreements by making export difficult even in the absence of tariffs.

The NFF has and will continue to work closely with government to provide a collaborative and constructive approach that delivers outcomes for Australian farmers and agribusiness. The relationships between industry and government negotiators need to be strengthened to ensure the

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exchange of information, views and priorities. NFF will also seek out opportunities to form alliances with upstream and downstream industry associations in other countries to complement the efforts of the Australian Government to build partnerships with the governments of our trading partners.

The NFF will seek to leverage its role as chair of the Cairns Group Farm Leaders to push for meaningful action on improving market access, reducing and removing damaging domestic support payments and holding WTO members to account regarding commitments to abolish export subsidies, trade facilitation and transparency.

What the industry needs

The Australian Government should:

- Negotiate commercially advantageous bilateral trade agreements (including with India, Indonesia, the EU, the UK, Taiwan, Peru, Mexico and Hong Kong) and regional trade agreements (such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement (RCEP), the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP 11), the Pacific Alliance and the Australia-Gulf Cooperation Council FTA) that deliver market access and opportunities for Australian farmers and agribusinesses.

- Continue to advocate for conclusion of the Doha Round Agreement involving commercially meaningful gains in market access for agricultural commodities from entry into force.

- Review, and where necessary, renegotiate existing bilateral agreements to ensure that Australian origin agricultural products have the most favourable access rights.

- Ensure trade agreements have review mechanisms, encompass a systemic approach on resolving NTBs and include the 'most favoured nation' principle.

- Ratify signed trade agreements and work with partnering nations to ensure that they come into effect swiftly.

- Ensure that trade agreements do not dilute Australia's biosecurity requirements.

- Ensure the agricultural sector is at the centre of trade negotiations to adequately address unique requirements to the trade in agricultural goods such as biosecurity standards.

- Protect our production capacity and access to international markets by safeguarding Australia's reputation for clean, safe, environmentally sustainable food and fibre products through robust, evidence-based biosecurity systems, underpinned by strong science and risk management.

- Promote Australia's outstanding food safety and biosecurity credentials overseas and seek out opportunities for trading partners to recognise Australia's world leading systems.

- Encourage greater transparency, communication and strategic focus from agricultural counsellors regarding their efforts to resolve technical and other non-tariff barriers to trade.

- Continue funding the Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation programme to enable the Australian agricultural and processed food sectors to promote their interests overseas.

- Appoint a Special Agricultural Trade Envoy to publicly promote the benefits of trade to the agricultural sector and to the nation more broadly and ensure that the specific needs of agriculture are addressed in FTA and market access negotiations.

- Support and encourage the activities of the Cairns Group Farm Leaders in advocating for multilateral agricultural trade liberalisation through the WTO.

- Pursue the limitation and elimination of domestic support programs through the WTO that disadvantage Australian agricultural exporters in key markets.

- Utilise the full suite of measures available in the WTO to pursue the interests of Australian agricultural producers, including more active use of the dispute settlement mechanisms (either as a complainant or a third party)

- Support the role played by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in providing a forum for the ongoing liberalisation of global trade and in setting the rules by which countries trade.

- Support for the rules of the WTO includes the use of the WTO dispute settlement mechanisms where there is an indication that a breach of these rules has occurred.

- Acknowledge that being a strong advocate for a rules-based system carries with it a requirement to support the associated mechanisms that uphold and enforce the rules.

- Affirm that the Australian agricultural industries operate according to the rules set out under Article 6 of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

- Encourage greater competition in the provision of certificates of origin by expanding the number of accredited bodies that can issue certificates and enable self-certification for primary products.