

Media Release

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Australia's fresh produce exports losing out to our competitors

A lack of progress on market access negotiations for Australian fresh fruit and vegetable exports is restricting the growth of the fresh produce industry.

Members of the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) represent approximately one third of Australia's fresh produce exports and are calling for a whole of government approach to negotiating new market access to key export markets.

"Australia's approach to negotiating market access arrangements appears to be different to competitor countries such as the USA and Chile. Under the new China-USA trade deal, China has agreed to finalize market access protocols for U.S. avocados, blueberries, potatoes, and California nectarines. While Chile seems to be concluding new market access negotiations with China in about 2 years, compared to the 6 years it took Australia to negotiate access for table grapes to China" said Michael Rogers, CEO AFPA.

Currently, Australian apples and blueberries are next in line for access to China. Negotiations for these products commenced in 2017 despite blueberries requesting access in 2010 and apples from mainland Australia being part of previous negotiations back as far as 2006.

"Key competitor countries are securing access to markets like China, and by the time Australian growers have access the market is crowded with competitor product. Australia's domestic growth is low and growers need access to more consumers" said Mr Rogers.

Some of Australia's core competitors in the global marketplace are Chile, Peru, Argentina and New Zealand, all of whom have been able to gain access for products to China in significantly shorter timeframes than Australia. Chile successfully gained market access for pears to China in 2019, with the negotiations taking only two years, while Peru was also able to secure access to China for blueberries in 2016 after a year of negotiations. New Zealand was able to secure access for avocados to China within four years.

In 2019, China announced new market access for 12 products from 12 countries, none of which were Australian. Meanwhile, the Australian blueberry industry estimate that the lack of access to the China market is costing the industry \$44 million in export revenue annually.

"We know that countries like Chile are investing significantly in market access and market improvement for their fresh produce industry and most importantly have high level political commitment from their governments to securing market access for fresh produce. The Australian government needs to do the same if it truly intends to grow the value of Australian agriculture over the next 10 years" said Mr Rogers.

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***About the AFPA** - The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) is made up of Australia's key fresh produce growers and suppliers. The AFPA represents half the industry turnover of the Australian fresh produce sector - \$4.5 billion of the \$9.1 billion total; 1,000 plus growers through commercial arrangements and more than 15,000 direct employees through peak harvest, and up to 25,000 in the grower network.*