



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Trade Sub-Committee

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 10 February 2015

Chair: Hon Bruce Scott MP

Deputy Chair: Maria Vamvakinou MP

Growing \$16 billion in trade between Australia and the Middle East

Diplomatic representatives from countries as diverse as the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Qatar, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Kuwait, Iraq and Tunisia will attend a roundtable public hearing tomorrow for a federal parliamentary inquiry into trade with the Middle East.

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will be asking the representatives of the Gulf states about a resumption of the free-trade negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council, which stalled in 2009.

The Trade Sub-Committee will also be looking for insights into how Australia can best grow its \$16 billion in trade with large countries such as Egypt and Morocco, as well as the fast developing smaller nations like Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon.

Australia's trade, investment and community engagement with the Middle East has been enhanced by the growing aviation links with 140 flights a week between Australia and the Gulf and the presence of more than 350 Australian companies in the region. Australian businesses are expected to take advantage of opportunities in the region with Dubai hosting World Expo in 2020 and Doha hosting the World Cup in 2022.

According to the Department of Agriculture's submission, as the population grows in the Middle East, the demand for Australian-grown food such as wheat, sheep meat and other agricultural exports will also rise due to the physical limitations of the region's arid climate, lack of suitable farming land and scarcity of water.

In 2012-13, Middle East countries imported more than \$3.4 billion of processed and unprocessed food from Australia, and according to a Department of Industry's submission, the demand for premium cuts of lamb and beef and other high-value foods will grow along with the popularity of premium restaurants, supermarkets and convenience stores in the region.

Public hearing

Date/Time	Wednesday 11 February 2015, 11:00 am
Location	Committee Room 1R1, Parliament House, Canberra
Witnesses	Diplomatic representatives of Middle Eastern nations

Live audio broadcast will be available at www.aph.gov.au/live

For media comment: contact the Trade sub-committee Chair, the Hon Bruce Scott MP on (02) 6277 4949 (Parliament House)

For background information: Further details about the inquiry, including the full terms of reference and how to contribute, can be obtained from the committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/jfadt or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 2313 or emailing jscfadt@aph.gov.au.