



Submission No 42

Inquiry into Australia's Overseas Representation

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION

Organisation: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
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CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Dr Carter

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the 2011 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into *Australia's overseas representation*.

Following the public hearing on Friday 10 February, I am providing some additional information about DAFF's international objectives and about our role in comparison to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) overseas.

DAFF's original submission to the inquiry focused on the department's overseas network of agriculture counsellors. This network is vital to our international objectives, but it forms only one part of a comprehensive international engagement program that includes regular exchanges of policy and technical delegations with our full suite of trading partners.

The department's major international objectives are:

- removing distortions to international trade and agricultural production to level the playing field for Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries
- improving the rules and protocols that provide market access for Australian commodities through regional and bilateral agreements and arrangements
- supporting scientific risk-based biosecurity policies to maintain Australia's favourable pest and disease status, protect our unique natural environment and provide verification assurance for our exported goods
- enabling sustainable resource management to ensure that international fisheries and forestry resources are well managed and agricultural productivity is maintained
- building international partnerships for improved trade and to improve the capacity of trading partners to assist in pre-border biosecurity
- influencing the global agenda on agriculture, fisheries and forestry through participation in international institutions on matters such as global food security, trade and agricultural policy.

Some of the questions at the public inquiry on 10 February suggested that there may be some benefit in clarifying the difference between the role of DAFF, and the role of Austrade. In pursuing its objectives, DAFF operates primarily at the government to government level. While the department actively engages with our domestic stakeholders to ensure we are able to

represent their interests on behalf of the Australian community, we would not normally engage in trade promotion/marketing activities.

As Austrade have stated in their submission to the inquiry, *“Austrade is the Australian Government’s international trade, investment and education promotion agency. Austrade works to advance Australia’s trade and investment interests through information, advice and services to business, industry and government. Austrade provides advice to DFAT on specific issues impeding Australian business engagement which can be addressed through bilateral and multilateral representations and negotiation¹”*. DAFF works cooperatively with Austrade to assist in interpreting rules of trade for specific commodities both in relation to Australia’s export processes and host country import requirements. DAFF assists industry to find the appropriate Austrade contact if they are seeking assistance for trade promotion.

DAFF counsellors are based in capital cities, close to our counterpart agencies in those countries. This is the most effective location for the nature of the DAFF role, and there would be limited benefit in extending the DAFF network beyond capitals. Where we are unable to place a DAFF counsellor permanently in a market, we make effective use of the DFAT posts, supported by advice from Canberra. DAFF also makes use of the more extensive network of Austrade representatives, if the need arises to resolve any technical issues emerging in regional areas, including in relation to specific consignments that may have been detained for one of a range of reasons. DAFF is often the first point of contact for industry for consignment specific issues and our counsellors make a significant contribution to resolving them.

DAFF works to improve the rules of trade and the trading environment for agricultural produce through negotiation in multilateral and bilateral government to government forums as well as through policy advocacy with host governments. DAFF representatives engage both at the level of the broad rules for trade and those applying to specific commodities and products in the bilateral trade relationships with trading partner countries. We work closely with DFAT on all of these issues.

DAFF assists portfolio industries with maintaining existing market access, and pursuing technical improvements and new market access. The department engages with industry and trading partners to prioritise and assess requests for export market access. We also provide science-based verification, certification and inspection services. Again, we work closely with DFAT on these issues.

The department is also actively engaged in international activities to support the new risk based and intelligence led approach to biosecurity. This includes technical collaboration and capacity building projects as well as regular audit and inspection visits. Officers from across the department, centrally and regionally are engaged in these activities. One example of these efforts is that DAFF currently has staff placed with the Ministry of Agriculture in Jakarta, Indonesia, as well as in the Makassar region, as part of our efforts to assist develop Indonesia’s capacity to respond to emerging infectious diseases.

DAFF engages in the broader international policy priorities of the Australian Government such as trade policy, climate change, sustainable resource management (in particular fisheries and forestry) and food security. We participate actively in international meetings and organisations in pursuit of Australia’s agricultural priorities. We assess the impacts of global issues and policies; and contribute to whole of government responses and initiatives as appropriate.

During the public hearing on 10 February, the Committee asked about our role regarding animal welfare, particularly for exports of livestock. The department’s international objectives, and the

¹ Submission No 26: Austrade submission to Inquiry into Australia’s Overseas Representation (Mr Jim Enright)

activities of DAFF Agriculture counsellors, as outlined in our original submission, encompass a range of issues that affect market access, including animal welfare. Of our overseas representatives, those based in Indonesia and the Middle East are the most significantly engaged in animal welfare. This is because of the significance of Australia's livestock trade to those countries and the importance of maintaining market access for the trade. DAFF is an active participant in the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and works in that context to improve standards for international animal welfare. The department supports and engages actively in the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy under the OIE and administers programs that relate to international animal welfare.

I trust this additional information assists the inquiry to understand the significant level of international engagement by DAFF and to better understand the role of our overseas representatives in that context.

Yours sincerely

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Trade and Market Access Division