

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2015

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 157

Division/Agency: Trade and Market Access Division

Topic: Agriculture white paper commitment

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator SIEWERT asked:

Please provide an update on the \$30.8 million funding for breaking down 'technical barriers to trade'. What has occurred thus far? Are the five new 'agriculture counsellors' on track? What processes will occur before they take up their roles in January 2016? What else will the funding provide for?

Answer:

Under the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, the Government is investing \$30.8 million over four years to break down technical barriers to trade.

Five new agriculture counsellors in key overseas markets and seven additional locally employed staff will help industry maintain existing and achieve new market access, at the cost of \$16.3 million over four years. The counsellors have been selected and will be deployed overseas from January 2016 in Vietnam, Malaysia, the Middle East, China and Thailand. The designated counsellors are currently undergoing pre-posting training within the department and meeting with key government and industry stakeholders to discuss current trade and market access issues.

The remaining funding is enabling the Government to increase its capacity to connect all aspects of our agricultural relationships with trading partners, including through cooperation activities, technical market access negotiations and international standards setting. The department is developing a more rigorous, evidence-based and collaborative approach to its international work. It is working with industry sectors to support their development of export plans. It is gathering evidence and analysing information to develop technical market access strategies for key markets. It is also working with State governments and industry to take a more coordinated and collaborative approach to market access activities to improve outcomes for Australian agriculture. This is to ensure the efforts of industry and government on market access are better targeted and to leverage outcomes from free trade agreements.

The funding is also enabling the department to update and enhance the Manual of Importing Country Requirements, which provides guidance for Australian agricultural exporters on importing country requirements for a range of exported animal, plant and food commodities. This will make it easier for exporters to comply with importing country requirements.