



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Senator Glenn Sterle
Chairman
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and
Transport Legislation Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Sterle

Having reviewed the transcript of the Budget Estimates hearing conducted by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee on 24 and 25 May 2010, I would like to make corrections to the responses to questions asked by Senator Milne and Senator Colbeck.

The first correction relates to an answer provided by Dr Clegg to a question by Senator Milne, which can be found on page 40 of the proof Hansard of 25 May 2010. The correct response should read:

Dr Clegg – Yes. There are restrictions on the import of raw milk cheeses into Australia. The requirements of the Food Standards Code apply to food from all countries. In the case of New Zealand, soft cheeses are listed as risk cheeses, except for raw milk cheeses. If New Zealand had some establishments that were approved by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority for public sale in New Zealand, those soft cheeses of New Zealand origin could be imported into Australia under the current arrangements that we have. For cheese from any other country, it cannot be imported because it is treated as a risk food by AQIS and it will be required to be tested.

I wish to highlight to the committee that on page 40 I mistakenly said that soft cheeses of New Zealand origin are risk cheeses, except for raw milk cheeses. I should have said that soft cheeses, including soft raw milk cheeses, except those of New Zealand origin, are risk cheeses.

I also said that cheese from any other country cannot be imported, because it is treated as a risk food by AQIS and it will be required to be tested. I would like to clarify for the committee that only soft cheeses (except soft cheeses from New Zealand) are treated as risk food by AQIS. If soft cheeses from countries other than New Zealand are referred to AQIS, the cheeses are treated as risk food and must undergo specific testing for food safety hazards before they can be imported into Australia.

The second correction relates to an answer provided by Ms Anderson to a question by Senator Colbeck, which can be found on page 15 of the proof Hansard 25 May 2010. Ms Anderson has provided the following correction:

Senator COLBECK—What is our expectation of what we are going to be able to send? We sent 69,000 tonnes in 2008 and 15,000 in 2009. What are the caps? What are the limits on our capacity into the market?

Ms Anderson—The 70,000 tonnes you referred to were the most we have ever sent. I think last calendar year it was around 13,000 to 15,000 tonnes.

Senator COLBECK—Fifteen thousand tonnes is the figure I have for last year.

Ms Anderson—Generally, I would expect it to be somewhere between that, really.

I wish to advise the committee that, from memory, my final comment above was delivered simultaneously with Senator Colbeck's comment. On reading the transcript, it seems to imply that my answer referred to sending between 13,000 and 15,000 tonnes of beef to Russia this year. In fact, my comment was intended to refer to an amount somewhere between 15,000 tonnes and 70,000 tonnes. To remove confusion, the transcript could read as follows:

Senator COLBECK—What is our expectation of what we are going to be able to send? We sent 69,000 tonnes in 2008 and 15,000 in 2009. What are the caps? What are the limits on our capacity into the market?

Ms Anderson—The 70,000 tonnes you referred to were the most we have ever sent. I think last calendar year it was around 13,000 to 15,000 tonnes.

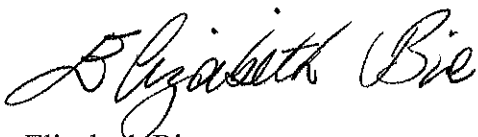
Senator COLBECK—Fifteen thousand tonnes is the figure I have for last year.

Ms Anderson—Generally, I would expect it to be somewhere between 15,000 tonnes and 70,000 tonnes, really.

I would appreciate it if you could bring these corrections to the attention of the members of the committee. I apologise for any misunderstanding that may have arisen.

If you have any questions, please contact me on 6272 3035.

Yours sincerely



Elizabeth Bie
General Manager
Ministerial and Parliamentary

21 July 2010