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4 July 2019

Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham MP
Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment
PO BOX 6100
Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA VIC 2600

Dear Minister,

RE: Europe's Geographical Indications detrimental to Australia's cheese industry

As an industry organisation representing over 400 food and beverage businesses in Melbourne's north, we wish to express our strong concerns about recent negotiations on the Australia and European Union Free Trade Agreement.

Specifically, we wish to bring to your attention the significant negative impact that protection of European food names (known as Geographical Indications) would have on Australian cheese businesses. This would mean that names such as feta, parmesan, halloumi, taleggio and others would no longer be able to be used.

Details about the issue can be found at dairyaustralia.com.au/industry/exports-and-trade/geographical-indications

This issue is of great concern to our Melbourne's North Food Group partner businesses. Implementing GIs will force Australian cheese exporters to change product names and re-brand, resulting in significant financial expenses and an uncertain future.

The Australian Dairy Industry Council has warned that locally produced cheese varieties with a value of production worth $180 million and export sales averaging $55 million each year would face extinction if the EU succeeds in forcing Australia to accept and implement strict labelling rules.

Melbourne's north is home to many cheese producers and the inclusion of GIs will place hundreds of jobs in the region at stake. We ask as a matter of urgency that the Federal Government considers the ramifications GIs will have and to strongly contest the inclusion of GIs in the trade agreement.

We ask that you consider our request as a priority initiative given the potential impact on our businesses, jobs and Australia's cheese industry.

More information regarding the issue can be found at
http://www.australiandairyfarmers.com.au/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=214867

Yours faithfully,

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