

AGRICULTURE — INTERNATIONAL TRADE RELATIONS

**441. Hon RICK MAZZA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:**

I refer to market tensions with current trading partners.

- (1) Is the state government currently pursuing trade agreements with other trading partners such as India and Indonesia to safeguard WA agricultural enterprises and jobs?
- (2) If yes to (1), what measures are being taken?
- (3) What funding will be dedicated, and over what period, to ensure a level of diversification within our agricultural industry to ensure its long-term future?

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) Obviously, I think there is a salutary lesson that Australia should not be following down the path of Donald Trump. We have a huge trade surplus with China and we need to ensure that we have respectful relationships with such an important trading partner. However, we are absolutely aware that we need to diversity in all our markets; just as the New Zealanders found when the English entered the common market, a reliance on one particular market can be very dislocating. We are certainly doing a whole range of things. Within the department there is a dedicated trade and investment directorate, which is doing a very good job to look at diversifying our markets. For example, last year, we brought down a number of delegations from ASEAN countries, really well-targeted, wholesalers and retailers, to show them Western Australian value-added products. We have big wine expos every year in Singapore. We have had delegations going to Qatar and other Middle Eastern countries, promoting our boxed meat, and, of course, we are doing a lot of work with India. Indeed, delegations from India and Indonesia were going to be coming down this year, which, of course, have been delayed. We are really working very hard on the malting barley exports to India.

I want to put in a plug here for the work done by the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre, which we half fund. I urge members who are interested in this matter to make sure that the federal Grains Research and Development Corporation does not dismember AEGIC. It has been doing extraordinary work in developing new markets throughout Asia for our oats products, innovating with oats into noodles and rice, and, of course, solving all the issues that have been an impediment for us to get our malting barley into India. It is a very important agency to keep supporting so that we can get this diversification of our market.