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Ms J.J. Shaw, MLA

Chair: Inquiry into Western Australia's economic relationship with the Republic of India

3rd of March 2020

Dear Ms Shaw,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our interest in the important inquiry you are leading.

Australian and Western Australian sheep producers would be the main beneficiary from more open trade of sheep meat with India. Current tariff is at 37%.

We have always had an interest in working with the Government to gain greater access to sheep meat eating markets around the world. Put simply, Australia is a world leader of sheep meat production and processing. Australia is the only country with a large scale successful sheep meat and wool industry. Australia has the ability to grow its industry if we continue to drive demand.

It is critical that Australia continue to strongly push to open market access for sheep meat to markets around the world. India, the EU and GCC are at the top of the list. Sheep farmers in Australia are enjoying current high meat and wool prices due to open markets with no government market interference. Farmers will now breed more sheep and lambs and it is important we continue to open markets for this increased production.

India is a classic example. A huge market with a growing middle class even once vegetarians are taken out of the equation and an economy enjoying over 7% growth.

We understand the sensitivities surrounding agricultural tariff reduction in India but we can show that sheep meat is no threat to Indian farmers but actually is an opportunity for India. Australian sheep meat exports to India since 2012 have only been small volumes of high value lamb racks and lamb legs and a very small amount of mutton. This is due to India being a strong producer and exporter of lamb and mutton to the Middle East as their smaller sized stock is perfect for curry dishes.

Larger Australian lamb is suitable for higher end hotels and restaurants in India's thriving cities and has never competed against India's own domestic production.

Any trade agreement between Australia and India will help underpin the future of the Australian and Western Australia sheep industries.

I and my team including Bernard Gooch and Graham Lyon are available to discuss how Western Australia would directly benefit from free trade with India.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R J Fletcher', is written over the typed name.

Roger Fletcher
Managing Director
Fletcher International Exports