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Australia's grain industry recognised for quality and reliability in China

Following on from the successful AGIC Asia Conference in Shanghai last week, Australian grains industry representatives concluded a successful round of high level talks in Beijing with key Industry participants and Government agencies and officials as part of its Industry Roundtable Discussion series.

"The Chinese market is a major market for a range of Australian grains, oilseeds and pulses and providing information and a clear and consistent message about the Australian industry, its quality and reliability is very important for all sectors of our Industry and particularly for Australian grain growers," said Pat O'Shannassy, CEO of host organisation, Grain Trade Australia (GTA).

"We have had strong participation and support for the Roundtable events, together with key delegates from across the Australian Industry. We were delighted that representatives of GTA, Grains Industry Market Access Forum (GIMAF), GrainGrowers, Grain Producers Australia (GPA) and Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre (AEGIC) were all able to make up the Australian Industry delegation," said Mr O'Shannassy.

Mr O'Shannassy said "The delegation had the opportunity to engage with a major trading party across production, trade and research interests and opportunities, thus promoting the overall Australian grains industry."

The Roundtable event involved high level discussions and dialogue with Chinese Government Agencies and industry participants looking at further alignment of the commercial, technical and regulatory trade environments for the grain trade between Australia and China.

"It was very clear that the Australian grains industry must continue to focus on the quality of its product, the assurance of quality through the entire supply chain and also importantly to focus on the collaborative approach to technical developments across the markets," said GIMAF Chairman, and GPA director, Barry Large.

Mr O'Shannassy said that the Roundtable events also worked towards enabling increased trade facilitation, market access and promotion, resulting in improved development of trade policy and

communication between respective Asian and Australian industries at both a commercial and technical level.

“China is an extremely important and significant market for the Australian Grains Industry with exports valued at more than \$A2.9 billion per year, which represents around 23 per cent of the value of Australia’s grain exports,” said GrainGrowers Trade Policy Manager, Dr Cheryl Kalisch-Gordon”.

Dr Kalisch-Gordon said “With a record harvest to sell into global markets there couldn’t be a better time for the Australian grains industry to showcase the inherent high quality, reliability and safety of its products in two of its most important Asian markets”.

“The coordinated efforts of industry – through the National Residue Survey, Wheat Quality Australia, the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre, the Grains Industry Code of Conduct and industry representations - are all critical to the sustainability of Australian grain exports and by extension the Australian grains industry. They all serve to confirm Australian grain’s high value compared with its cheaper competitors. At a time of global low prices and under the threat of increased protectionism this message has never been more important.”

China imports around 6-7.0 million tonnes annually of Australian barley, wheat, sorghum, canola and pulses, said AEGIC CEO, Mr Richard Simonaitis.

Mr Simonaitis said “The Australian grains and oilseeds are used in a variety of products in China including malt barley for beer production and feed barley for animal feed; wheat flour production for various products including noodles, dumplings and steamed buns; sorghum for both feed and alcohol production; canola crushing for the retail vegetable oil market and as raw materials in various stock feed diets”.

The Roundtable meetings with Government agencies and Trading Houses enabled the delegation to gain a closer understanding of the policy settings influencing the grains sector in China and the potential trade implications in the near-term future and beyond. The strong support for Australian grains was very evident from both government and industry representatives.

Mr O’Shannassy said that with economic growth driving a rapidly growing middle class and changing dietary preferences and the proximity of China with its huge population to Australia made it an extremely important market to the future growth and success of the Australian Grains Industry.

AGIC Asia – Indonesia is planned for May 2017 to be accompanied by an Australian grain Roundtable discussion.

“The AGIC Asia conferences and Roundtables events, particularly the events in Shanghai and Beijing, are very valuable to supporting the maintenance and growth of this important market for the Australian Industry and importantly for Australia’s grain growers,” Mr O’Shannassy said.

GTA hosts the AGIC Asia Conference series together with Australian Oilseeds Federation(AOF) and Pulse Australia (PA). The AGIC Roundtable series was also supported by GIMAF, GrainGrowers, Grain Producers Australia and the Australian Grains Export Innovation Centre (AEGIC).

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