Focus on export potential with Focus Taiwan

Soon C. Tan

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Focus on Export Potential

With Focus Taiwan

Focus Taiwan aims to build on the already sound relationships between Taiwan and Western Australia, stretching across business, political, and cultural spheres. Western Australian efforts to increase agricultural and fisheries exports to Asia were given a significant boost in November 1998 with the launch of the Focus Taiwan Project. Dr Soon Chye Tan reports on the aims of Focus Taiwan and how the project is already influencing Western Australian export opportunities.

The project was developed and managed by AGWEST Trade and Development to promote Western Australia’s agricultural, fisheries, and food products. It has provided an opportunity to forge closer links between the Taiwanese and Western Australian agribusiness sectors, encompassing the full spectrum of business development, investment, and promotion.
Future prospects

Western Australia is moving to align its trade more closely with Taiwan in the lead-up to the island’s accession into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which will progressively see the liberalisation of more than 800 tariff lines. Trade liberalisation will favour many of Western Australia’s current and potential agri-industry exports to Taiwan.

Taiwan is Western Australia’s seventh largest agricultural and fisheries export market, offering significant growth potential. Western Australian agricultural and fisheries exports to Taiwan in 1997/98 totalled about $187 million, dominated by the fisheries, cereals, meat, and wool sectors.

The Taiwanese economy continues to perform strongly despite the Asian economic slowdown, maintaining close to 6 per cent real growth rate in 1998.

Successful Focus Taiwan launch in Kaohsiung and Taipei

The launch of the Focus Taiwan Project in Kaohsiung (2 November 1998) and in Taipei (3 November 1998) highlighted the potential of the Western Australian agricultural, fisheries, and food sectors to Taiwanese industry.

It was a highly successful event, with 218 Taiwanese agri-business representatives attending the Taipei function and more than 100 attending the Kaohsiung function. According to the Australian Commerce and Industry Office and the Australian Business Centre in Taipei, it was the most successful product promotion ever organised by Australia in Taiwan.

Below:
Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries
Monty House (far left) and Agriculture Western Australia Chief Executive Officer Dr Graeme Robertson (far right) visit the Sogo Supermarket in Kaohsiung as part of the Focus Taiwan launch.

Bottom: Australian meat on sale at a Taipei supermarket – Taiwan is eager to support quality Australian food products.
A launch dinner, hosted by Western Australia's Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Monty House, was well attended by representatives of supermarket chains, hotel buyers, chefs, agents, distributors, industry leaders, government officials, and Western Australian delegates.

Forty-two companies and 45 representatives from Western Australia accompanied Mr House to Taiwan to take part in the launch.

**Launch acts as catalyst for new trade ventures**

AGWEST Trade and Development has confirmed that the launch and product promotion is already acting as a catalyst to increasing trade. Discussions are under way between Western Australian companies and Taiwanese buyers to import Western Australian seafood, fruit, and vegetables.

Follow-up meetings will be held with top Taiwanese companies to encourage and attract investment in Western Australia. AGWEST Trade and Development staff will visit Taiwan to make special presentations on 'Opportunities in Agriculture in Western Australia' to potential Taiwanese investors. A successful presentation was made by Paul Frapple and Steve Trevenen in January 1999.

An Asian market study tour for horticulture visited Taipei in March 1999 to investigate market requirements and consumer specifications. In addition, opportunities for further product promotions in Taiwan are being explored.

Agriculture Western Australia has already developed an Agreement of Cooperation with the Taiwanese Department of Agriculture and Forestry. The Agreement will promote personnel, technical, and information exchanges, and develop collaborative research and cross investment.

The Focus Taiwan project has strengthened the working relationship between Western Australia and Taiwan. Arrangements were made for a delegation from Taiwan, including staff from the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, to attend an SQF2000 quality assurance course in Perth. The course took place in February 1999.

Another likely outcome of the Focus Taiwan project will be the development of collaborative research between Agriculture Western Australia and the Taiwanese Livestock Research Institute.

**AGWEST to appoint representative in Taiwan**

AGWEST Trade and Development will appoint a representative in Taipei to develop business, trade, and investment opportunities for Western Australian agricultural, fisheries, and food products.
Additionally, a short-term consultant will be engaged in Taiwan to study food and fibre distribution patterns and trends, WTO trade implications, and food safety issues.

Local representation will make sure that the opportunities uncovered by the Focus Taiwan project receive significant follow-up and that the Western Australian agri-industry sector maintains a continued high profile in Taiwan.

Acknowledgements

Focus Taiwan is managed by Agriculture Western Australia's specialist trade unit – AGWEST Trade and Development. The Project Manager is Dr Soon Chye Tan.