

Speech by Charlotte Austin at the China International Conference 2023

Hosted by CFNA

Hohhot, Inner Mongolia 5 - 6 August 2023

Vice President Madam Yu Lu, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning, dajia hao, kia ora koutou katoa.

It is a great pleasure for me to join you here today on behalf of the New Zealand Government. My name is Charlotte Austin; I am the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries' Vice Minister based at the New Zealand Embassy in Beijing. I would like to thank CFNA for inviting me to speak today.

I have a personal connection to the Dairy Industry, I grew up in Canterbury in the South Island of New Zealand, where over 40% of New Zealand's national dairy herd can be found. My family run a farm where the closest local village has a population of only 200 people. I understand and appreciate the value dairy and farming has on families and communities.

New Zealand benefits directly from a reputation as a reliable producer and exporter of safe and high-quality dairy products, largely due to its robust food production and regulatory systems. More than 95% of the dairy products we make are exported to more than 150 markets around the world. The New Zealand dairy industry is a significant national employer, and dairy farming is the foundation of rural communities in many parts of the country.

China remains New Zealand's largest export market for dairy products. Close to 35 percent of the dairy products produced in New Zealand were exported here to China in the year to June 2023. Totalling \$8.64 billion New Zealand dollars.

While the bulk of these dairy exports are ingredients for China's food manufacturers, a growing proportion of our trade includes innovative, high-quality dairy products for consumers and the food service sector; these include liquid milk, cheese, infant formula and other nutritional products. There is also growing interest in sheep and goat milk products.

Infant formula is important to New Zealand and our dairy sector, accounting for almost 1.5 billion NZD in export revenue in the year to 31 March 2023. New Zealand's environment, in conjunction with a

vibrant Research and Development sector, strong regulatory environment for food production and safety and dedicated farmers mean New Zealand is an optimal for producing premium infant formula product for the world.

China and New Zealand also enjoy a long standing and strong relationship in agricultural cooperation, spanning across many areas such as food safety, trade facilitation, milk quality and safety, dairy vet and dairy farmer training, genetics, and animal health and epidemiology.

In July of this year, our relationship was further strengthened when the Prime Minister of New Zealand Chris Hipkins and, New Zealand's Minister for Trade, Agriculture and Biosecurity Damien O'Connor visited China. A key outcome of the visit was the renewal and signing of the Five year Strategic Plan on Promoting Agricultural Cooperation between our two countries. The signing by Ministers was witnessed by Premier Li and Prime Minister Hipkins, with a key focus in supporting the sustainable growth of dairy industries in both countries.

New Zealand is working closely with the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR), under our long standing Food Safety Cooperation Arrangement. This includes cooperation in infant formula product registration and food safety training. We are excited to be welcoming a new round of talented food safety scholars to New Zealand to expand their knowledge, share experiences and deepen capabilities in the area of food safety. We look forward to kicking off this programme later this year.

Sustainability is becoming a core operating consideration for the dairy industry around the globe. We usually hear it in the context of managing environmental impacts of industries but it's important to also consider the longevity of industries and with this longevity of communities. The challenges posed by climate change, food security, and the structures of our communities and how we do business has brought sustainability to the forefront of the minds of governments. In New Zealand government and industry, along with local communities, are tackling this issue through the work of He Waka Eka Noa. This is an ambitious programme to account for agricultural emission, and work with the industry to find practical measures to reduce them.

Through mutual understanding and knowledge exchange, I believe we can better tackle these challenges while maintaining the supply of

safe, high quality, and nutritious dairy products for consumers here in China and around the world, and ensure a sustainable future for our dairy industries.

Finally, I would like to touch briefly on the pandemic and its long standing impacts. It is clear that the global COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the lives of so many. It changed the way we communicate and do business, but it also reinforced the importance of open trade and ensuring that consumers have access to safe and nutritious food.

New Zealand's response to the pandemic showed the dedication of our farmers and processors to continue to produce and export safe, high-quality food – even under strict pandemic controls both domestically and abroad. Our resilient, dynamic and adaptable response reflected the commitment we have to contribute to regional food security, and regional economies. With the growing incidences of climate anomalies, such as the recent heatwave over the northern hemisphere, wildfires in continental Europe and North America and the significant flooding in my own country – we must continue to build on Covid – 19 learnings and encourage an adaptable and resilient food production sector to combat ongoing joint challenges, like climate change.

Conferences like this are important to support exchange and dialogue toward this goal. And so I would once again like to thank CFNA for inviting me to participate in today's conference.

I look forward to hearing about the ambitions of many of the dairy sectors around the world presenting here today. With our joint efforts, I look forward to seeing New Zealand and China continue our active cooperation in the sustainable development of our dairy industries, and partners in a dairy trade that contributes to consumer well-being and prosperity of both our countries.

Thank you.