**Charlotte Austin**

**Speech at 13th China International Dairy Industry Conference 2024**

**China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Foodstuffs, Native Produce and Animal By- Products (CFNA)**

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Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, President Cao and Vice President Madame Yu , Gé wèi zūn jìng de lái bīn, Nǚ shìmen, xiān sheng men, dà jiā hǎo, Wo shi xin xinlan zhu hua da shi mao rui

It is my pleasure to join you today at the China International Industry Conference a full 15 years since the first conference was held in 2009.

Please allow me to take this opportunity to thank the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export Foodstuffs Native Produce and Animal By- Products – CFNA for inviting me to speak today. It was a pleasure to attend last year in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia and now in Beijing. This conference provides us with an important regular occasion to discuss the future direction of the dairy industry in China and globally.

For over 150 years now dairy has been an important part of New Zealand’s economic and social history. Our dairy industry is not only central to our current economic prosperity – it has been and remains part of our national identity. As New Zealanders we have a deep connection to our land and significant pride in our dairy industry. Many of our most successful dairy farms are family businesses that have been operating for generations. They live where they farm, this includes my own family. It is therefore no surprise that we value our ability to produce safe, high-quality, and nutritious dairy products in a sustainable manner that preserves our environment. And we are very proud of our position as a trusted international partner and exporter of dairy products. The Ministry for Primary Industries, of which my team are part of, are responsible for the regulation of the biosecurity and food safety systems, we do not take this position for granted and maintain robust food production and regulatory systems, to ensure high quality products for our consumers.

New Zealand exports 95% of our dairy products to more than 150 markets around the world. China remains New Zealand’s largest export market and 35% of our dairy products reached local consumers here last year. I believe that there is still a lot of room for innovation, collaboration and industry growth. Dairy consumption in China is still low by international standards, it is expected to grow over the next 10 years as incomes continue to rise and consumers shift from ‘drinking milk’ to ‘eating milk”, that is consuming a broader range of dairy products and products made using dairy ingredients. I believe that New Zealand is in a unique position to help China meet this demand: New Zealand is planning to double our exports in the next ten years, and supplying dairy to China is an important part of this.

Our dairy relationship is part of a broader cooperation structure. China and New Zealand enjoy a long relationship in agricultural cooperation. Our joint efforts cover product quality and sustainability, food safety, trade facilitation, milk quality and safety, dairy vet and dairy farmer training, genetics, and animal health and epidemiology. This relationship was further cemented in July last year when New Zealand and China renewed the Five-year Strategic Plan on Promoting Agricultural Cooperation between our two countries. The plan has a key focus on supporting the sustainable growth of dairy industries in both China and New Zealand.

Sustainability has become a core operating consideration for dairy industries the world over. We usually hear about it in the context of managing environmental impacts of industries.  However, it’s important to also consider the longevity of industries and with this the sustainability of the communities in which they are embedded. The challenges posed by climate change, food security, community development and how we do business in the 21st century brings a focus on sustainability to governments, consumers and producers. Through discussion, 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, and ensuring a sustainable future for our dairy industries and communities.

New Zealand is deeply committed to playing its part in ensuring agricultural industries and producers have a strong and sustainable future. We are all committed to producing safe and innovative products for discerning customers, while reducing the impact on our planet. It is challenges that often lead to innovation and later today you will hear in depth from my Colleague Mr Jack Lee in his session on some of the specific New Zealand dairy farmer and company challenges and innovations.

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 continuing development of our dairy industries, and as continued partners in a dairy trade that contributes to consumer well-being and prosperity of both our countries.

Thank you again xiè xiè dà jiā. I wish you all the best for the remainder of the conference.