

Agribusiness delegation heads to China to improve industry ties

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The Malcolm Broomhead-chaired Australia-China Belt and Road Initiative is poised to lead its inaugural agribusiness delegation to China this weekend, which is aiming to identify achievable, practical steps to further advance Australian-Chinese agricultural industry collaboration.

More than 120 influential Chinese representatives from government, business and academia including one of China's vice finance ministers, Zhu Guangyao, and Wahaha Group chairman Zong Qinghou will meet with the Australian delegation in Beijing.

The deputy director of China's Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) Standards and Regulations Centre, Professor Guo Lisheng, will also present to the delegation on how the Belt and Road initiative can help reduce technical and non-tariff barriers in trade.

AQSIQ is a ministerial-level department in charge of entry-exit commodity inspection, import-export food safety, national quality standardisation, certification and accreditation, and entry-exit animal and plant quarantine.

The Australian delegation will include firms such as Rubicon Water, Ruralco, Rabo Bank, Seafarms and Elders.

"One of the issues with Australian agribusiness is we tend to have just second hand views of doing business in China. We talk about lots of the mega issues but there are lots of others we don't talk about, notably the practical issues that limit us," said Elders chief executive Mark Allison.

“From my experience over many years, what a Chinese business partner wants is a long term profitable partnership. So it is about understanding how that can be achieved. We hear a lot about transactional business where one side wins and the other loses. It shouldn't be about that.”

He said Elders had been in China for 12 years and made money in only one.

“Programs like this drive significant respect, trust and understanding between the players,” he said.

Mr Allison, who is also chairman of Agribusiness Australia, will address the Chinese delegation about reducing non-tariff barriers between China and Australia.

Among the other issues to be discussed, the Victorian government will discuss the challenges faced by the fresh cherry and stone fruit sectors and how to open market access through a reduction of technical trade barriers.

The irradiation standards adoption by China significantly impact those sectors in Australia.

Rubicon Water will discuss what China can learn from Australian irrigation and water management to develop China's rural agriculture, while Ruralco will discuss how both countries can join forces in technology and innovation.

Seafarms will have the opportunity to speak to top level Chinese investors about its \$2 billion Sea Dragon prawn farm project in Western Australia, which is seeking Chinese backing.

[Project Sea Dragon](#), when completed by 2025, aims to produce 150,000 tonnes of black tiger prawns annually from 10,000 hectares of ponds, making it the largest tiger prawn producer in the world.

The project has already won the approval of the NT government and the federal government.

The Australian delegates plan to host a debrief session on Sunday where they will develop three practical next steps to further advance Australian agriculture industry collaboration with China and the region.

Ms Jean Dong, who is the executive director of the Australia China Belt and Road Initiative, said those recommendations would be presented to the Australian Embassy and the Chinese government.

At the Belt and Road forum in May this year, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that China would host an inaugural import-export forum next year.