



HD Free trade with **China** will unlock opportunities for farmers: Joyce

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WC 1,691 words

PD 17 November 2014

SN Australian Broadcasting Corporation Transcripts

SC ABCTRS

LA English

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The importance of **China**'s relationship with Australia will be front and centre today when president Xi Jinping addresses Parliament. And, a concrete demonstration of what the relationship means will come shortly afterwards when the president signs a free trade deal that is expected to unlock **billions** of dollars worth of opportunities for Australian exporters - especially farmers. Barnaby Joyce joins AM to discuss the new deal.

CHRIS UHLMANN: And as Louise mentioned, the importance of **China**'s relationship with Australia will be front and centre today when president Xi Jinping addresses Parliament.

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And a concrete demonstration of what the relationship means will come shortly afterwards when the president signs a free trade deal that is expected to unlock **billions** of dollars worth of opportunities for Australian exporters.

The deal has been 10 years in the making and will open up markets across a host of goods and services and the Government says it will be a boon for farmers.

Barnaby Joyce is the Agriculture Minister, good morning.

BARNABY JOYCE: Morning Chris, how are you?

CHRIS UHLMANN: Good thanks, now Barnaby Joyce, some in the National Party haven't always been keen on free trade; do you think it's a good thing?

BARNABY JOYCE: Well, obviously Chris no trade agreement is ever totally free; there are bilateral trade agreements euphemistically called free trade agreements but um, I have a strong belief that this one will be extremely well received, um, it's very important that we keep up with our trading partners, especially New Zealand.

And, we've all been very much focused on the last, since we've been in government for the last year to make sure that we're good friends just as good friends as New Zealand is, and I think that is what has been asked of myself; certainly it's been asked of Minister Robb to make sure that we do our very best to get a better return back through the farm gate to make sure more money arrives back on the kitchen table for the mums and dads of Australia and I think that Minister Robb's to be commended for the work he has done.

But I'll leave that up to the Prime Minister to disclose and currently I'm sitting here looking at our biosecurity arrangements at Sydney Airport so it's another section of our trade.

CHRIS UHLMANN: Alright, you talked about the New Zealand deal though, people have been hoping that Australian famers would get as good a deal as New Zealand got, will they?

BARNABY JOYCE: You know, I'll leave that for the announcement.

The one thing I'm absolutely certain about is, if you start opening your Christmas presents early, then not much fun being around the tree when the rest of the family's there, so obviously I know what it is, in fact, I've got it sitting here in front of me, so..

CHRIS UHLMANN: You could read a line or two out to us..

BARNABY JOYCE: Yeah that would be, that would be a great way if I wanted to end up back on the backbench I suppose; I couldn't think of better way to go about it. Rather then, then I reckon they might detect me as having Ebola and I'll be staying here in the airport.

CHRIS UHLMANN: So, how much can you give us a rough idea, what do you think this deal will worth to the Australian economy over time?

BARNABY JOYCE: Well generally you know, they put through numbers, I just look at what we're actually doing Chris, like, I'll give you one example: in the last year, the sheep in our sheep exports has gone up by 12,660 per cent.

I know that New Zealand has basically redeveloped their economy and is rebalancing their books on the back of basically one commodity - **dairy**. And if Australia can match that, then that's a great assistance to our nation and how we pay our bills and rebalance the books, especially in the current downturn in some of the other rocks we sell: coal and iron ore. If we can alleviate that in some way by exports of **dairy** and exports of beef and exports of **wine**, then that - horticultural produce, fish - then that is a good outcome for us Chris, and I want to make sure that everybody understands that you don't have to be on the land to be a benefactor of a soft commodity exports.

If you're walking Pitt Street or Collins Street, you need our farmers to make a buck so that we can rebalance our books and my role as part of this Government is to do my very best to see that that happens and the only way it happens is if farmers get more return through the farm gate for their produce.

CHRIS UHLMANN: Well looking at **dairy**, although you won't read agreement out to us, someone's been whispering in the ears of newspapers this morning because it's on the front page of almost every one that **dairy** farmers are going to do well out of this, is that your expectation?

BARNABY JOYCE: Well, our exports to **China** in the last year is around about half a **billion** dollars so, we have a massive capacity and you can see people who are not known for making stupid commercial decisions such as Gina Rinehart are sniffing the wind on this and her half a **billion** dollar investment just into the South Burnett in southern Queensland is a classic example of how smart **business** people are going to be part of this deal.

Norco, exporting up to I think, 90,000 litres of **milk** a week, getting between \$7 to \$9 a litre, that puts, when you think about the \$1 rubbish that you get paid in Australia, that gives an example of why people are very enthusiastic about this and why Australian superannuation funds, if they're smart, if they sharpen their pencil, they just think about it for a little while, should be playing into the space of investing in Australian agriculture.

CHRIS UHLMANN: Why are deals on sugar, rice, wheat and cotton so much harder?

BARNABY JOYCE: Well, all things- every country um, really has a great sympathy for their farming sector and you've got to really make sure that you don't, in getting a deal for our farmers, threaten their farmers.

That's why I've always been saying, Chris, that we will not be the food bowl for Asia, that's an absurdity, what we'll do is we'll be providing a premium product into a premium market.

And, whilst I was over in **China** last month, talking to minister Han; I think they really respected that and the same does for the fact is what we say is that we want to see **Chinese** farmers also getting a better return as their people make it to the middle class and that they can clearly understand that Australian farmers are not going to put **Chinese** farmers or Indonesian farmers or Indian farmers or Japanese farmers or Korean farmers out of a job.

In fact, we want to see the agricultural sector across the globe increase in its return to the farm gate, because these are the people who overwhelmingly do most of the work but in some instances, get a very small part of the endeavours that they are part of.

CHRIS UHLMANN: Now, it's a separate matter, but are we closer to signing a deal on live cattle with **China**, which was really about clearing a health protocol?

BARNABY JOYCE: Ah yes, and look, I'll be more factual about that, if the story hadn't leaked and I didn't want it to leak, I think we'd be a lot closer than where it is.

You've got to understand that ultimately this is the deal that **China** does the final announcement on and they will put it on their website and they you'll know it's official and that is about as close to the facts as I can allay them.

I have always worked very closely with the Chinese to make sure that we get this through; I think it puts real competition back into our cattle market. We have a problem in Australia where you've got a couple of processors that really have had a walk in park over the last couple of years and we need to make sure that they're paying the right price when they go to the rails to buy sheep or cattle at the Dubbo saleyards or the Roma saleyards or wherever.

CHRIS UHLMANN: Barnaby Joyce, why did the Australian Government get caught so flat-footed on climate change over the weekend when the American president clearly came here with an agenda to put it on the agenda?

BARNABY JOYCE: Well, you know, when you actually think about it, China's natural downturn of carbon emissions is going to be about 2030; America has had a boom in gas exploration and obviously their capacity to go to natural gas, not natural gas, fracking basically, and their change in their motor vehicle fleet has meant that they are naturally becoming more carbon efficient and I am always one who looks for the facts.

When the actual facts start turning up, not the promises, but the facts, the actual delivery, then you know, I suppose they will be a part of it.

But I think we can't go, our job is to repay our bills, we don't repay our bills, then this discussion in sophistry; we've got to make sure that we've got an economy that is not basically hijacked by promises but reacts to actual delivery.

CHRIS UHLMANN: Barnaby Joyce, we'll have to leave it there, Thank you.

BARNABY JOYCE: Good on ya.

CHRIS UHLMANN: And Barnaby Joyce is Australia's Agricultural Minister.

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