

SE News
HD **Towers part of free-trade plan**
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A FREE-TRADE agreement between **China** and Australia could be one step closer, following a visit from a **Chinese** delegation to North Queensland.

The **Chinese** delegation visited Charters Towers along with Trade Investment Queensland and Meat and Livestock Australia last week as part of a tour of Australian beef cattle regions.

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"The delegation of high level **Chinese** officials were looking at Australia's cattle registration system and the traceability of our cattle from birth to abattoir," Charters Towers Regional Council Mayor Frank Beveridge.

"This visit was not on investment, but was part of a wider discussion on the **Chinese** Australian Free-Trade Investment." Cr Beveridge said the delegation visited various cattle properties as well as the Dalrymple Saleyards.

He said there are strong hopes an agreement will be reached sooner rather than later.

"They have visited research centres in North Queensland, port facilities as well as cattle stations to form an opinion on our future export industry into **China**," he said.

Cr Beveridge said if the FTA agreement was to go ahead, any rural town linked to the grazing industry would have huge flow on benefits, as one of the biggest challenges for rural and regional Australia is not having enough competition for our agricultural products.

Charters Towers Regional Council CEO Mark Crawley said before visiting Charters Towers, the delegation visited the quarantine depot at the Townsville Port.

"They are potentially looking at live export cattle and looking at the quarantine side of things," he said.

"I think they now have a better understanding of how the animals in North Queensland are tracked and looked after during the time they are actually on the ground." National Farmers Federation president Brent Finlay said an FTA with **China** is a wonderful opportunity not only for the northern beef industry but for the whole of Australian agriculture.

"A good trade agreement, a good trade outcome to **China** will define agriculture for the next 20 years," Mr Finlay said.

"I have just been to **China** and the interest in buying red meat — beef and lamb from Australia — it was just exciting." Mr Finlay said there are a lot of **Chinese** delegations in Australia and part of those tours are about finding the right **business** partners.

"With all these opportunities in front of us, it is really important that we grab those opportunities as Australian agriculture," he said.

“Because all our competitors around the world, they see the same opportunity. So we have to be smart, clever and quick but most of all we need as a basis, a really good trade agreement with **China**,” Mr Finlay said.

Earlier this month The Australian reported the debate about where the opportunities lie for Australia in the Asian food boom — where an affluent middle class of three **billion** will be looking to **buy** more meat and **dairy** products and better-quality food by 2030 — has matured in the past year.

Beef sales to **China** and the US are booming, the live cattle trade is set for its biggest year ever after Indonesia ordered a record 264,000 head in the next three months. Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce conducted a tour to **China** where the focus has shifted to Australia as a food bowl — or “delicatessen” as those in government call it — supplying Asia’s most wealthy, discerning buyers with premium, high-value, safe and traceable food.

CO mtlvau : Meat & Livestock Australia Limited

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