

SE EARLY GENERAL NEWS
HD **We're missing the boat on exports: Forrest**

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WC 739 words

PD 29 May 2014

SN Farm Weekly

SC FFARMW

PG 4

LA English

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AUSTRALIA is in danger of missing out on long-term beef exports unless there is a change of attitude to trade.

That was the view of Andrew Forrest, who made the claim during a visit to inspect Harvey Beef.

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Mr Forrest inspected the abattoir last Friday, the first time he had been to the facility since the shock announcement that his Minderoo Group had bought it three weeks ago.

During his visit, he told Farm Weekly he was calling for Australian business leaders and government to get behind the Australian name to support and promote the industry.

Mr Forrest said creating an Australia-Sino 100-Year Agricultural Partnership would boost Australian trade with **China**.

The partnership would link key industry leaders and State and Federal government ministers from **China** and Australia.

Mr Forrest said he had made the call of action, because he didn't believe Australia was realising its potential to sell beef into Asia.

"Australia is not competing successfully overseas," he said.

"I am putting out a call of action to all ministers, who are responsible for our future, and all agriculture investors, who are responsible for this country's future, to come together to provide success overseas.

"The Asian market has changed irreversibly, they are never going back.

"They are going to become massive food importers, but that doesn't mean there will be a major jump in prices, they may only go up marginally."

Mr Forrest said a **Chinese** partnership would secure long-term markets and trade stability.

"I'm asking every Australian, not just those in the food industry, to look to our critical leadership to adopt foreign policy that's highly conducive to trade and our biggest future customers," he said.

As for plans for his newly purchased abattoir, he said he wanted to work with the team at Harvey Beef and WA producers to fill the Asian food bowl.

"We are not being what we call the food bowl of Asia if anything, it is emptying," Mr Forrest said.

"We need to get out there and promote Australia, promote WA and promote Harvey Beef."

Mr Forrest said he noticed when he visited **China** that in almost any supermarket he would find all different beef products, from Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina, but no Australian products.

He believed in the future of the beef industry, and as a country Australia needed to get beef into overseas markets and make the Australian name well known.

"My heart is in it, and we need to grow, and grow together," Mr Forrest said.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, the Business Council of Australia and **China's** WH Group representatives have been discussing the partnership initiative and future trade opportunities with Mr Forrest and are very positive.

"They want to meet every six months," Mr Forrest said.

"It will be tough, but they want it."

Based on his experience in the **mining** industry, Mr Forrest said agricultural industry leaders and ministers need to take note of previous **mining** industry mistakes and experiences of the early 2000, and get serious about promoting Australia.

"We cannot repeat the mistakes the **iron ore** industry made, where companies competed viciously against each other," Mr Forrest said.

"They did it in the **iron ore** industry because of union instability, and were so focused on competing with one another.

"We pride ourselves in producing some of the best food in the world and that pride is justified, but we aren't competing well enough we are not the ones feeding **China**."

Mr Forrest and his wife Nicola met with Harvey Beef staff during their first visit to the abattoir, where they inspected the plant.

And it was clear that Mr Forrest's surprise **purchase** of WA's biggest beef abattoir earlier this month has put a smile on the faces of many staff.

More than 300 employees met with Mr Forrest over a barbecue lunch and were able to chat with him.

Mr Forrest said he wanted to visit because he liked to integrate with people first hand.

"I am here to see the team and the facilities," he said.

"There is a lot of excitement here, people believe in the future and so they should.

"I believe communication is everything and I want to support and grow the (WA beef) industry."

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AN Document FFARMW0020140528ea5t00018