

SE Lifestyle
HD Japanese visitors see source of dairy delights

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WC 351 words

PD 17 October 2014

SN Tasmanian Country

SC TASCOU

ED TasCountry

PG 5

LA English

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Japan has long been a vital market for Australian dairy products and last week a Japanese delegation had a close look at Tasmania's dairy sector.

The annual governmental Japan-Australia DairyTalks were held in Devonport over two days and included visits to dairy farms and processing facilities. The talks are an opportunity for representatives from both countries to discuss dairy trade and industry outlooks.

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Dairy Australia international trade development manager Peter Myers said while much of the focus for future growth had recently been on China, Japan has long been a very important market for the dairy industry.

Last year Australia exported about 125,000 tonnes of dairy products to Japan worth about \$511 million. This represents about 16 per cent of all Australian dairy exports.

"Japan has been one of the largest export markets for Australian dairy for decades and is one of our best customers, particularly for cheese," Mr Myers said.

About 82 per cent of the Australian dairy exports to Japan are cheese products. Because of import restrictions, most of the cheese exported to Japan is sold in 20kg blocks. Once it is in Japan the cheese is processed into sizes and shapes and elaborate packaging similar to chocolate. Some is also processed ready for the food-service industry.

Cheddar is the most common type of cheese sent to Japan, along with mozzarella, and Mr Myers said a significant amount of cream cheese was also exported there.

Maintaining good trade connections with Japan is a key focus of the annual dairy talks and for Dairy Australia.

Mr Myers said marketing activities included the Japan Cheese Scholarship program, that offered Japanese dairy companies and distributors an insight into Australian dairy.

Since the program started in 1997 there have been about 300 graduates and many have careers and key positions in the Japanese industry. "It's a network that is very much alive and extremely important in spreading the news about the latest business opportunities and up-to-date knowledge about Australian dairy," Mr Myers said.

CO dryust : Dairy Australia

IN i010010502 : Dairy Cattle Farming | i0 : Agriculture | i01001 : Farming | i0100105 : Cattle Farming | ilsfarm : Livestock Farming

NS c312 : External Markets | c31 : Marketing/Markets | ccat : Corporate/Industrial News | ncat : Content Types | nfact : Factiva Filters | nfcpin : C&E Industry News Filter

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