

NZ-EU free trade deal: Australia farmers rubbish deal (Weekes, J., 2023)



By John Weekes

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An Australian farming group is calling for negotiators to push for a better deal than New Zealand received. Photo / Bevan Conley

Australia's farmers have rubbished the new NZ-European Union free trade deal and urged compatriots to run a mile if the EU offers them something similar.

The Kiwi deal with the European bloc of 450 million people was formalised on Monday morning and expected to save Kiwi exporters at least \$110 million a year by 2029.

The local dairy industry hated the deal but many in the technology, horticulture and viticulture sectors supported it.

In Australia, the head of a powerful farmers' group said his country needed meaningful access for lamb, beef, dairy and sugar consumers in Europe.

He took a dim view of the agreement New Zealand signed, urging Australian negotiators to push harder.

"We'd say walk away, thanks but no thanks," National Farmers' Federation chief executive Tony Mahar told the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

"If it doesn't mean commercial dollars, then we're not interested."

Meat, fruit and dairy were the biggest Kiwi exports to Europe and it seems some concerns voiced in those sectors have now resonated across the Tasman.

Former Primary Industries Minister Nathan Guy, now Meat Industry Association chair, said the effort Kiwi delegates put into the FTA should not be underestimated.

"We've got some of the best negotiators in the world."

He told the *Business Herald* the FTA's impact varied dramatically from sector to sector.

"It's fair to say the meat industry and dairy are disappointed, but in saying that we do realise there is an upside in the sheepmeat quota."

Guy said the honey industry was happy and mānuka producers were "over the moon".

Professor Christoph Schumacher said in free trade negotiations, the larger nation or bloc generally came out on top.

"Europe has always been sort of a fortress through the EU and has imposed tariffs," he told the *Business Herald*.

EU subsidised its own farmers and imposed tariffs on outsiders to the point Australian or New Zealand produce was often as cheap as that from local farmers.

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