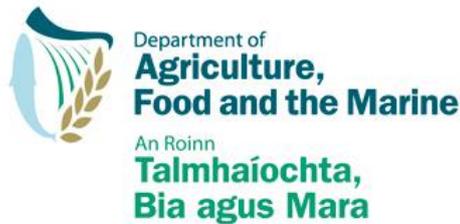


Oifig Faisnéise
Áras Talmhaíochta
Sráid Chill Dara
Baile Átha Cliath 2



Press/Information Office
Agriculture House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2
D02 WK12

Tel: (01) 607 2802

Twitter: 
E-mail: press@agriculture.gov.ie
Website: www.agriculture.gov.ie

If you have any queries on this press release please contact press@agriculture.gov.ie

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18th April 2017

Minister Creed & Minister Zhi Sign Landmark Protocol in Dublin

Advances on Beef access, Brown Crab & Thoroughbred Horse trade after talks

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD, made a number of significant advances in the development of Irish exports of beef, seafood and thoroughbred horses to China, during a meeting with Chinese Minister Zhi Shuping in Dublin today. The Chinese Minister, who has responsibility for the Chinese Quarantine and Inspection Service, has been in Ireland since Monday.

This morning's meeting was the second formal bilateral meeting of the two Ministers and comes after Minister Creed's discussions with Minister Zhi in Beijing last September. The progress made follows significant engagement between Irish and Chinese Officials since then culminating in today's events in Dublin.

With reference to beef access both Ministers signed a formal protocol on beef exports to China that paves the way to access for Irish beef to China.

Commenting on the meeting in Dublin, Minister Creed said, *"I was very pleased to welcome Minister Zhi to Ireland this morning as a follow-up to our negotiations in Beijing last September. China is now such an important partner for Ireland on agri-food issues and is our third largest trading partner in this sector. Whilst we had constructive discussions on a wide*

range of issues, I am especially delighted today to have signed this Beef Protocol with China. This marks another major milestone in the process of getting Irish beef into the Chinese market. Today's signing marks the culmination of intensive political, technical and diplomatic engagement with the Chinese authorities. I look forward to moving forward with the next steps as quickly as possible"

In order to complete the process to allow Irish beef exporters access to the Chinese market a veterinary health certificate with AQSIQ must be finalised which will be followed by an inspection visit by the Chinese Certification and Accreditation Administration (CNCA) to approve individual processing plants for export.

The Ministers also signed a protocol to facilitate trade in thoroughbred horses for an emerging racing sector in China. The protocol will open access to China to horses not born in Ireland, but present in the jurisdiction for six months. This is an important development for the sector.

On live crabs, the Ministers have agreed an export certificate which will permit the resumption of exports to the critically important Chinese market. The Irish seafood sector has been extremely anxious to resolve a number of certification issues which have hampered the trade, and exports are expected to resume in the very near future.

Concluding, Minister Creed said, *"The search for new third country markets is a top priority for my Department and has taken on an added urgency in the context of the challenges posed by Brexit. Today's developments are significant steps in developing positive relationships and progressing trade with China, and I will continue to pursue such opportunities as a priority in China and elsewhere.*

Notes for Editors:

What are the overall Agri food exports to China?

- Irish Agri-food exports to China have increased from approx €240 million in 2012 to €780 million in 2016, a three-fold increase.
- This made China the third largest market for Ireland's agri-food sector in value terms after the UK & US in 2016.

What is the breakdown of current agri food exports to China?

- Dairy produce, pigmeat and animal furs/skins are the biggest sectors.
- Dairy exports were €540 million (61,500 tonnes) in 2016 meaning that China is now the second biggest export destination for dairy exports after the UK and accounts for 16% of our dairy exports.
- Pigmeat exports to China have increased three-fold from €37 million (25,000 tonnes) to almost €120 million (over 70,000 tonnes) between 2012 and 2016. China is now also the second biggest export destination for pigmeat after the UK.

What is beef consumption in China?

□ Beef consumption in China has increased almost six fold between 1990 and 2015 to almost 4 kg per capita and is forecast to increase further over the coming years. However, Chinese beef production has not kept pace with rising demand and imports are estimated to have increased to more than 1.2 million tonnes in 2016, accounting for around one third of beef consumption.

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