

12 May 2022

Middle East FTAs Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RG Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
Barton ACT 0221

By email: UAECEPA@dfata.gov.au
GCCFTA@dfat.gov.au

Proposed Australia-UAE CEPA & Australia-GCC FTA Negotiations

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the potential United Arab Emirates (UAE) Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (UAE-CEPA) and the Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade Agreement (GCC FTA).

Queensland Cane Growers Organisation Ltd (CANEGROWERS) is a not-for-profit public company with the sole purpose of promoting and protecting the interests of sugarcane growers since inception in 1925.

Representing over 70 per cent of Australia's sugarcane growers, CANEGROWERS is the peak body for the sugarcane industry. With 13 district offices in Queensland, our strong regional presence ensures that services and advocacy are provided in local communities as well as at the highest levels of industry and government decision-making.

CANEGROWERS strongly supports sugar's inclusion in all trade agreements. Maintaining and improving the terms of trade for Australian sugar depends on ensuring sugar is included in future trade agreements, defending existing market access, and ensuring third countries are held accountable their international commitments.

Improving the terms of trade for Australian sugar relies on duty free / quota free commitments for sugar being included in all trade agreements Australia negotiates. This is particularly important in the current world trade environment, an environment characterised by supply chain disruptions, geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions and one in which the World Trade Organization's (WTO) role in securing new and improved market access commitments for agricultural products is severely limited.

Importing more than three million tonnes of sugar annually, many of the GCC economies, UAE and Saudi Arabia in particular, are significant raw sugar importers. These markets have been in important destinations for Australian raw sugar and the potential remains for their re-emergence as important markets.

While most GCC economies do not apply a tariff on sugar imports, they have WTO bindings that enable them to impose a 15% tariff on sugar imports. This means the flexibility for GCC countries to impose tariffs on Australian sugar remains. In the absence of progress in the WTO, it is essential that any new trade agreement Australia enters with either the GCC or UAE ensures that any future trade be unencumbered by the potential threat of either future tariff or quota restrictions.

CANEGROWERS fully supports Australia entering the proposed negotiations.

Please contact Mr Warren Males (warren_males@outlook.com / 0417 002 325) for further information in relation to the issues raised in this submission.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Galligan', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Dan Galligan
Chief Executive Officer