

## **ASEAN Diplomatic Heads of Mission and Australian Government Representatives: Reflections on Toowoomba 14 – 16 August 2017**

### **His Excellency Mr KOY Kuong, Ambassador of Cambodia**

“I found that the visit of ASEAN Heads of Mission in Canberra to Toowoomba from 14 to 16 August 2017 was really impressive since we had fieldtrips to interesting places like privately owned airport, University of Southern Queensland including National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture, Oakey Nippon Meat Processing Plant and Feedlots, and met and talked with many important people at the Roundtable initiated by the Australian ASEAN Council, discussing on potentials to increase volume of trade and investment on food and agriculture related commodities between ASEAN member states and Australia. I hope that the Roundtable’s outcomes would be used as inputs for the Business Summit on the sidelines of the Special ASEAN-Australian Summit in March 2018 in Sydney.”

### **Mr Michael Mugliston, Senior Trade Negotiator, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

““The ASEAN Heads of Mission visit to Toowoomba highlighted the opportunities to work with the ASEAN Ambassadors, High Commissioners and attachés in Canberra to further strengthen and develop the ASEAN-Australia economic relationship. The Toowoomba Food and Agriculture Roundtable sent out signals that Australia is committed to furthering its relationship with ASEAN; that all levels of Australian government are keen to engage with domestic stakeholders; and that our ASEAN partners stand ready to work with us. I found it invigorating to be part of such a wide-ranging event where participants were keen to work together to translate the evident goodwill into concrete benefits for all.”

### **His Excellency Mr KWOK Fook Seng, High Commissioner of Singapore**

“I would like to thank and congratulate the Australia-ASEAN Council, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and our various gracious hosts in Toowoomba for giving the ASEAN Heads of Mission a good understanding of the region’s capabilities as an agricultural hub. Toowoomba and the Darling Downs present tangible opportunities for partnerships with the ASEAN region in the agriculture sector. The various site visits provided a first-hand understanding of potential synergies in agricultural production, processing, supply chain logistics and the applications for cutting-edge agricultural technologies. The visit has also raised awareness about ASEAN in regional Australia. All very meaningful outcomes which add to the momentum of engagements in the lead up to the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit that Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull will host in March 2018. “

### **Her Excellency Mrs Minda Calaguian-Cruz, Ambassador of the Philippines**

“Toowoomba is transforming into a very diverse and robust economy. Mayor of Toowoomba Paul Antonio relayed to me that the Filipino workers in his constituency have an impeccable work ethic and contribute immensely to the development of the region. Having arrived in Wellcamp Brisbane West Airport and being given an overview of its operations, I anticipate that this facility will be expanding in the near future as food and agriculture trade between Queensland and Southeast Asian nations increases. ASEAN’s 620 million strong population and sustained economic growth offers immense opportunities for Toowoomba’s industries. Through sustained dialogue, I am positive that we can start with small but concrete steps to accelerate economic relations between ASEAN and Australia.”

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### **Ms Philippa Power, Executive Director Policy and Research, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development**

“The Toowoomba Food and Agriculture program was a valuable opportunity to engage across government, with industry and with ASEAN ambassadors. The site visits gave participants the chance to see first-hand elements of the supply chain in operation and to experience the value that Toowoomba has to offer. This practical experience was a great underpinning for the round-table discussions, which were an opportunity to hear perspectives on challenges and opportunities in developing trade links between ASEAN countries and Australia. For me it brought home the importance of all parties in the trading relationship understanding the links in the supply chain in order to maximise what works well and to identify and address any barriers and constraints. It also made it clear that developing and strengthening links requires commitment, coordination and cooperation from everyone involved.”

### **His Excellency Mr Y. Kristiarto S. Legowo, Ambassador of Indonesia**

“The visit to Toowoomba was valuable for us to get first-hand information from the many stakeholders of the agriculture industries in the region. We were able to directly interact and share information as well our respective trade networks with Australian exporters that have or plan to trade with Indonesia and ASEAN in general. Besides having a large and growing middle-class population, Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. Not only that the Indonesian market will increasingly demand better quality products, but the food products have to meet the Halal requirements. It is important also to take note on the next step to accelerate trading relationship between our two countries. One of the ways to achieve that is by easing market access and doing business in Australia and ASEAN. The visit was indeed interesting and memorable. It was well organised and I thank DFAT and Australia-ASEAN Council for having us.”

### **His Excellency Mr Chirichai Punkrasin, Ambassador of Thailand**

“The agricultural production in grains, fruits, vegetable and livestock in the Toowoomba area is truly impressive. Together with the ongoing projects to upgrade the infrastructure will make Toowoomba a potential hub for agriculture and food trade between Australia and South East Asia. The visit to the University of Southern Queensland was particularly interesting. The important work being undertaken in agricultural research and technology development represents another area for potential collaboration between USQ and the ASEAN member countries. The visit by the ASEAN Heads of Mission was a good start. The challenge will be to get the stakeholders on both sides together to develop this potential into a meaningful trade relationship.”

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### **Ms LIU Bing, General Manager Asia (Acting), Austrade**

“It was a very well organised program which provided great insight into the Toowoomba food and agriculture industry and some of its high-quality, premium products that are currently exported to global markets. The program explained how the industry gained its global competitiveness: stringent quality control measures, continuous research and development, quality customer service, innovation and cutting edge technologies. The roundtable discussion with the ASEAN HOMs and export businesses was very useful in terms of enhancing mutual understanding, exploring stronger collaboration models and uncovering issues and barriers for future endeavours by all. I thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of the program and learnt a great deal from the presenters, the organisers, the businesses and the delegation members.”

### **His Excellency Mr NGO Huong Nam, Ambassador of Vietnam**

“Visiting Toowoomba, a productive agricultural region of Australia, gives us insights of how professional farmers and advanced technologies could bring miracles to Australia and her people. I believe that as key strategic and trading partners, ASEAN and Australia have a wide range of opportunities to foster cooperation on agriculture and food sectors, thus serving their peoples better in the coming time. Embassy of Viet Nam will introduce companies from Viet Nam to visit Toowoomba in the future to explore business opportunities.”

### **Consul Mutia Azura Mohamed, Director, Consulate of Malaysia (Sydney)**

“I found the trip particularly interesting and eye opening. The airport, feedlot, beef processing plant and USQ visits demonstrated the advancement of Australia in the agriculture sector. It was amazing to see 19,000 cattle heads at the Wainui Feedlot and the impressive new Wellcamp airport. All these reaffirmed Australia's comparative advantage in the agriculture trade over ASEAN countries. In terms of trade, Malaysia is already importing an average of \$1 billion of agro-food per year from Australia. As Malaysia strives to improve her self-sufficiency level, there exist opportunities in the agriculture technology space. Australia is positioned well for trading with ASEAN and with the development of specialised, agriculture logistics hub such as the Wellcamp Brisbane airport, it will definitely spur higher trading activities within these regions.”