

LETTERS OF UNDERSTANDING ON NEW INSPECTION ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPORTED
FOOD

I

27 June 1996

MINISTER FOR TRADE NEGOTIATIONS
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, WELLINGTON NEW ZEALAND

The Hon Tim Fischer MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA

Dear Tim

I am writing to you in connection with the recent consultations between our officials relating to the operation, in respect of New Zealand, of the Imported Food Inspection Program (IFIP).

The treatment of New Zealand exports to Australia under IFIP has long been a concern to us. We have always maintained a belief in the principle of a single market established under CER. In light of recent progress made toward the harmonisation of standards through the Agreement establishing the Joint Australia - New Zealand Food Standards Setting System and the imminent recognition of each other's regulatory systems under the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement, it is now most opportune to reconsider how New Zealand food is regarded under IFIP.

During the recent consultations between our officials it was acknowledged that a consistency of approach to food surveillance was indeed emerging in Australia and New Zealand.

Accordingly, I have the honour to propose the following arrangements for the conduct of food inspection between our two countries.

1 Risk Classified Foods

Risk classified foods will continue to be subject to each country's export control systems, border certification and inspection regimes. Officials will compile a joint list of risk classified foods by 1 July 1996. The initial list will comprise all foods currently risk classified in either Australia or New Zealand. Criteria for the classification and review of foods on the list will be developed and agreed by Australia and New Zealand by 1 January 1997.

2 Non-Risk Classified Foods

Australia and New Zealand will subject non-risk classified foods of New Zealand or Australian origin to only the same surveillance and compliance procedures as apply to domestic products within each jurisdiction. Non-risk classified foods will not be inspected at the border for other than true quarantine

reasons. Australia and New Zealand will use their best endeavours to implement undertakings contained in this clause by 1 January 1997.

3 Surveillance and Compliance Procedures

New Zealand will participate as a joint partner in discussions between the Australian States and Territories and the Commonwealth on domestic food surveillance and compliance procedures, to harmonise these unless to do so would be inappropriate for domestic circumstances. The harmonisation process will be conducted in accordance with COG principles and guidelines for regulatory action.

4 Third Country Product

Nothing in these arrangements will apply to products of third country origin.

5 Review

Australia and New Zealand will jointly review by 1 January 1998 the treatment of risk classified foods under these arrangements, with a view to ensuring the appropriate level of border inspection of food in this category.

Should the foregoing be acceptable to the Government of Australia, I have the honour to propose that this letter, together with your confirming letter in reply, shall constitute an Arrangement on Food Inspection Measures to take effect on the date of your reply.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

Philip Burden

II

The Hon Tim Fischer MP

27 Jun 1996

The Hon Phillip Burden MP
Minister for Trade Negotiations
Parliament House
WELLINGTON NEW ZEALAND

Dear Minister

I am writing to you with reference to your letter of 27 June 1996 regarding proposed new arrangements for New Zealand food products under the Australian Imported Food Inspection Program (IFIP) which reads as follows:

[here follows text as set out at I].

I confirm that the proposal set out in your letter is acceptable to the Government of Australia and that your letter, together with this reply, shall constitute a non-legally binding Arrangement on Food Inspection Measures with effect from the date of this reply.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

TIM FISCHER MP