



ACCI SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

KOREA FTA TASK FORCE

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ACCI Submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Korea FTA Task Force

ACCI - LEADING AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS

ACCI has been the peak council of Australian business associations for 105 years and traces its heritage back to Australia's first chamber of commerce in 1826.

Our motto is "Leading Australian Business."

ACCI and its predecessor organisations have been at the forefront of the trade policy debate in Australia for over a century. We have consistently represented Australian business on tariff debates, the creation of the world trading system and during the negotiations of multilateral, regional and bilateral trading agreements. We house the executives of the Australia ASEAN Business Council, Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee, Australia Malaysia Business Council, Australia Russia Business Council and the Australia-Thailand Business Council. Our New South Wales State Chamber houses the executive of the Australia Korea Business Council.

We are also the ongoing amalgamation of the nation's leading federal business organisations: the Australian Chamber of Commerce, the Associated Chamber of Manufactures of Australia, the Australian Council of Employers Federations and the Confederation of Australian Industry.

Membership of ACCI comprises the State and Territory Chambers of Commerce and Industry together with the major national industry associations.

Through our membership, ACCI represents over 350,000 businesses nationwide, including over 280,000 enterprises employing less than 20 people, over 55,000 enterprises employing between 20 and 100 people as well as the top 100 companies.

ACCI is the largest and most representative business organisation in Australia with its members employing over 4 million people.

Our Activities

ACCI takes a leading role in representing the views of Australian business to government.

Our objective is to ensure that the voice of Australian business is heard, whether from the top 100 Australian companies and small sole traders.

Our specific activities include:

- Representation and advocacy to governments, parliaments, tribunals and policy makers both domestically and internationally.
- Business representation on a range of statutory and business boards, committees and other fora.

- Representing business in national and international fora including: the Australian Fair Pay Commission, Australian Industrial Relations Commission, Australian Safety and Compensation Council, the International Labour Organisation, the International Organisation of Employers, the International Chamber of Commerce, the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Employers.
- Research and policy development on issues concerning Australian business.
- The publication of leading business surveys and other information products.
- Providing forums for collective discussion amongst businesses on matters of law and policy affecting commerce and industry.

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Publications

A range of publications are available from ACCI, with details of our activities and policies including:

- The ACCI Review a monthly analysis of major policy issues affecting the Australian economy and business.
- Issue papers commenting on business' views of contemporary policy issues.
- Policies of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- The Westpac ACCI Survey of Industrial Trends the longest, continuous running private sector survey in Australia. A leading barometer of economic activity and the most important survey of manufacturing industry in Australia.
- The ACCI Survey of Investor Confidence which gives an analysis of the direction of investment by business in Australia.
- The *Commonwealth Bank ACCI Business Expectations Survey*, which aggregates individual surveys by ACCI member organisations and covers firms of all sizes in all States and Territories.
- The *ACCI Small Business Survey* which is a survey of small business derived from the *Business Expectations Survey* data.
- Workplace relations reports and discussion papers including the ACCI Modern Workplace: Modern Future 2002-2010 Policy Blueprint, Functioning Federalism and the Case for a National Workplace Relations System and The Economic Case for Workplace Relations Reform position papers.
- Occupational health and safety guides and updates, including *National OHS Strategy and the Modern Workplace: Safer Workplace* Policy Blueprint.
- Trade reports and discussion papers including *Riding the Indian Elephant* and *Riding the Chinese Dragon*.
- Education and training reports and discussion papers.
- The ACCI Annual Report, which provides a summary of major activities and achievements for the previous year;
- The ACCI Taxation Reform Blueprint: A Strategy for the Australian Taxation System 2004-2014; and

• The ACCI Manufacturing Sector Position Paper: The Future of Australia's Manufacturing Sector: A Blueprint for Success.

Most of this information, as well as ACCI media releases, parliamentary submissions and reports, is available on our website - www.acci.asn.au.

ACCI and Trade Policy

One of the matters of greatest priority for ACCI in 2009 is support for free trade. ACCI continues to be a strong advocate of international attempts to conclude the World Trade Organisation current Doha Development Round negotiations. We have also stepped up our advocacy for greater attention to be given to the trade in services and continue to support bilateralism as a way of advancing Australia's foreign and trade policy interests.

ACCI has applied three broad principles to its advocacy on behalf of bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). First, they must be bold and comprehensive. Second, they must cover substantially all trade between the two countries, a requirement imposed upon Australia from its membership of the WTO. And finally, they must be 'WTO-plus' or put simply, they must deliver trade liberalisation outcomes for Australia beyond those that would have come from ordinary negotiations within the mainstream of the WTO system.

Absent these three principles – bold and comprehensive, covering substantially all trade and WTO-plus – any Free Trade Agreement will be little more than window-dressing.

Recommendation 1: The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry supports an Australia Korea Free Trade Agreement on the basis it meets the three principles listed above.

The Korean Economy

Korea's growing economy and increased openness to foreign investment and ownership gives the country strong potential to position itself amongst the most successful world economies. Rapid economic growth across North-East Asia over the past ten years is set to continue offering Korea further opportunities to capitalise on its recent accomplishments.

Major economic reform in Korea since the 1960s has propelled Korea to becoming a strong economic player in North-East Asia. Such economic reform incorporated an 'out-ward oriented' development strategy focusing on exports and integration into world financial systems. The strategy successfully opened the Korean economy to the rest of the world and greatly increased Korea's international trade.

Following the Asian financial crisis of the late nineties, Korea adjusted its fiscal policy to improve financial and corporate sector stability. As part of its strategy, the Korean government nationalised two major banks, and instigated mergers,

¹ The Official Website of the Republic of Korea (2009) *Economic Growth* Available online at http://korea.net/

² Ibid.; The Bank of Korea (2009) Overview Available online at http://eng.bok.or.kr

debt-equity swaps and liquidations.³ It also provided support to commercial banks through deposit guarantees, recapitalisation and the purchase of non-performing loans.⁴ Additional reforms to the corporate sector as well as the change to a free-floating exchange rate and the opening of the market completely to foreign investors⁵ further accelerated Korean economic growth in 1999 and 2000 to 9.5 percent and 8.5 percent respectively.⁶

The strong recovery of Korean financial systems and currency following the financial crisis of the late nineties demonstrates the sound fiscal policy of the Korean government. While Korea cannot be immune to the current world economic slowdown, Korea's past performance indicates that sound policy will underpin a sustained and timely response to any economic decline experienced in the near future.

Korea has implemented further reforms to its foreign exchange market since 2000. Specific programs have targeted aspects such as deregulation, balancing demand and supply and the stimulation of overseas investment.⁷ The reforms have been reflected in export growth which has contributed to a real GDP increase from 3 percent to 5 percent between 2003 and 2007.⁸ Goods and services exports currently account for 56.8 percent of GDP⁹ or an estimated \$US 379 billion.¹⁰

Recommendation 2: Korea has a strong economic systems that have shown resilience and adaptability even in times of crisis, placing the country in good stead to adapt to the current world economic slowdown. Korea is therefore an ideal trading partner as its economic stability and trade focus are likely to continue.

Australia and Korea: Merchandise Trade

Australia's trade relationship with Korea continues to strengthen and Korea is now our fourth largest export market and sixth largest overall trading partner. Merchandise exports from Australia to Korea have grown steadily from being valued at approximately \$9 billion in 2003-04 to \$14 billion in 2007-08. The highest valued exports (in descending order) to Korea are crude petroleum, coal, iron ore and concentrates and beef.

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³ Spilimbergo, A. et al (2008) *Fiscal Policy for the Crisis* International Monetary Fund Staff Position Note December 29, pp.27-28

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Bank of Korea (2009) *Historical Development* Available online at http://eng.bok.or.kr

⁶ Op cit., Spilimbergo, A. et al (2008) Fiscal Policy for the Crisis p.28

⁷ Op cit., Bank of Korea (2009) Historical Development

⁸ US Central Intelligence Agency (2008) *South Korea* The World Factbook. Available online at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html#Econ

⁹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2008) *Republic of Korea* Fact Sheet Available online at http://www.dfat.gov.au/GEO/fs/rkor.pdf

¹⁰ Op cit., US Central Intelligence Agency (2008) South Korea

¹¹ Ibid.

Korea's most profitable exports are semiconductors, wireless telecommunications equipment, motor vehicles, computers, steel, ships and petrochemicals. ¹² Korean manufacturing companies are prolific; Korea is home to the largest ship building company in the world, the largest LCD manufacturer, the second largest semiconductor manufacturer, the fourth largest steel producer and the fifth largest automotive producer. ¹³

The value of Australian imports from Korea has remained steady at approximately \$A 6 billion since 2005-06.¹⁴ Major Australian imports from Korea match closely with that country's major exports: motor vehicles, telecommunications equipment and parts, refined petroleum and monitors, projectors and televisions (in order of dollar value of goods imported).¹⁵

Recommendation 3: Korea is a significant trading partner and an FTA between Australia and Korea would strengthen our already strong trade relationship.

Tariffs

ACCI believes that Australia's commercial and economic interests, and those of the world economy, are best served by a free and liberal system of global trade, capital, investment and information. Thus artificial barriers to global trade and investment, including tariffs, quotas and increasingly non-tariff trade barriers, have to be identified and then substantially wound-back, if not eliminated, with clear and strong resolve.

While this objective can best be achieved, and should be pursued primarily through multilateral frameworks and mechanisms such the World Trade Organisation (WTO), bilateral free trade agreements such as the proposed Australia – Korea FTA are also mechanisms that can be used to further trade liberalisation.

Australia and Korea both apply import tariffs to products from the other country. An FTA that reduced or eventually eliminated such tariffs which would then benefit both Australia and Korea.

While a reduction of, for example, the 40 percent import tariff on beef to Korea has clear benefit to Australia, ACCI also supports a reduction of Australian import tariffs. ACCI strongly supports the premise that a tax on imports is a tax on exports. This effect arises due to tariffs causing:

- An increase of domestic prices for inputs into the production process;
- Increased labour costs; and
- An elevated exchange rate.

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¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Op cit., Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2008) Republic of Korea

¹⁵ Ibid.

Recommendation 4: ACCI believes Australia should continue to liberalise tariffs and reduce other assistance measures over time, and that an Australia - Korea FTA that promoted a reduction in Korean tariffs would assist Australian exporters.

United States – Korea FTA

If the Korea - United States FTA as signed in June 2007 is ratified by the legislatures of both countries, then comparatively low tariff rates will apply to products exported from the United States.

This means that Australian beef and pork manufacturers in particular would eventually experience significant competitive disadvantage once the relatively high Korean agricultural tariffs are reduced on US exports.

Beef is Australia's fourth most significant export to Korea despite a currently high tariff rate of 40 percent. A loss of competitiveness due to preferential treatment being given to US farmers would significantly effect the Australian beef industry which currently counts Korea as its third largest export market. ¹⁶ An Australia – Republic of Korea FTA would assist beef exporters to remain competitive.

Similarly, Korea is Australia's seventh largest pork export market and another industry concerned about the possible effects of a Korea - United States FTA in the absence of a similar bilateral agreement with Australia. 17

Other Australian export products such as coal, barley, and wood products would also be at a competitive disadvantage in Korea following a Korea – United States FTA if Australia does not negotiate similar terms. ¹⁸ This is of particular relevance at the present time when Korea is considering raising tariffs on oil products to combat lowering oil prices.¹⁹ Australian trade with Korea would be significantly affected if the United States were to have a bilaterial agreement with Korea and Australia did not, in both in the agricultural and resources sectors.

¹⁶ ABC Rural News (2009) Graziers Hope for South Korean Trade Deal News Bulletin 16.01.09

Available online at http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/200901/s2467593.htm
¹⁷ Plowman, K. (2008) *RE Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (TPSEP)* Correspondence. Available online at www.dfat.gov.au/trade/fta/tpp/subs/tpp_sub_australian_pork_081020.pdf

¹⁸ Zhuang R., et al (2007) Implications of the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement for Agriculture and other Sectors of the Economy Agribusiness & Applied Economics Report No. 619 Available online at http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/7636/1/aer619.pdf; US Department of Agriculture (2008)US – Korea Free Trade Agreement. What's at stake for barley and malt? Fact Sheet Available online at http://www.fas.usda.gov/info/factsheets/korea/commodity-barley_malt.asp

¹⁹Thomson Reuters (2009) *S. Korea to lift crude oil import tariff in '09* Reuters India 23.12.08. Available online at http://in.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idINSEO26246920081223

Recommendation 5: The strong possibility of a Korea – United States FTA being ratified makes it more important to negotiate similar terms for Australian exporters through an Australia – Korea FTA so that Australian exporters are not at a price disadvantage.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Foreign investment by Australian firms is now a key component of our economic success. Foreign investment in production creates jobs that employ local people, drives economic growth by contracting with local suppliers, and allows a significant transfer of profit and revenue as well as technology and know-how from country to country.

ACCI research has shown the factors of greatest importance in raising levels of inward foreign direct investment are: foreign investor control; cost of capital; corporate taxation; regional integration; protectionism; and, shareholders rights and responsibilities.

In short, ACCI believes foreign investors want security in their investment from expropriation; internationally competitive taxation systems; and, look for open economies which practice liberal, outward looking trade policies.

Several studies have documented the strong links between trade and investment, FTA development and FDI increases.²⁰ Prospects for further investment between Australia and Korea are strong, especially as international trade is further liberalised in Korea.²¹ Investment is especially linked with trade in fields such as manufacturing and high technology areas as companies develop parallel export and investment strategies.²² An Australia – Korea FTA that included clauses to further liberalise investment processes and rules would expand investment relations and the economic development of both countries.

Recommendation 6: ACCI recommend that an Australia – Korea FTA include clauses to promote investment between the two nations.

Australia and Korea: Services Trade

Services trade between Australia and Korea is significantly lower than merchandise trade. Current data indicates that services constitute approximately 13 percent of Australian exports to Korea, and 9 percent of all Korean exports to

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²⁰ See Kwon, O. (2001) *Australia-Korea Economic Cooperation in the 21st Century: Challenges and Prospects* Centre for Korean Studies, Griffith University, Brisbane

²¹ Harvie, C. (2004) *The Australia-Korea Economic Relationship and Prospects for an FTA* University of Wollongong Economics Working Paper November 04-19, p.10

²² United Nations Development Programme (1999) International Trade Statistics Yearbook 1998, cited in Op Cit., Kwon (2001) *Australia-Korea Economic Cooperation in the 21st Century*

Australia. 23 While these are not large figures, Australian services exports to Korea grew steadily between 2003 and 2007, and this growth is set to continue.²⁴

Major services exports to Korea are education related travel (Korean citizens constitute our third largest international student body)²⁵ and other personal travel. Education has significant scope for growth, as Korean students increasingly require strong English language skills to compete for employment opportunities in their own country.

In addition to the further development of education and travel exports, significant scope for expansion exists in other sectors such as financial and IT services. ACCI would like to see a Free Trade Agreement that led to the closer integration of the Australian and Korean service economies. Over time Australia should aim for the service providers of both countries to be granted like or similar treatment to local service providers.

Recommendation 7: An Australia – Korea FTA would boost the already increasing services trade between the two countries providing a significant growth opportunity.

Conclusion

Korea is a strong economic power in the hub of the North-Asian region. Its emergence on the global scene presents a real opportunity for the Australian commercial sector to consolidate and build our bilateral trade.

Strengthening the economic relationship between Australia and Korea will improve the multi-faceted bilateral linkages between the two countries government-to-government, trade, education - that have been growing steadily over recent years.

The deal of complexity in negotiating such an agreement and achieving a satisfactory outcome will present many challenges. It will be important that these challenges do not lead to a lessoning of ambition along the negotiating path.

On the basis that the Australia - Korea Free Trade Agreement is a comprehensive agreement, that is WTO consistent and which will substantially increase the integration of the two economies, ACCI expresses its support for an Australia -Korea Free Trade Agreement.

²⁴ Crean, S. (2008) First Annual Australia-Korea Leadership Forum: Partnership For Prosperity Speech. 14 April 2008. Available online at

²³ Op cit., Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2008) Republic of Korea

http://www.trademinister.gov.au/speeches/2008/081014_korea_aust_leadership_forum.html

25 Austrade (2008) *Education to Korea* Available online at http://www.austrade.gov.au/Education-to-Korea/default.aspx

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