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Southeast Asia FTA Modernisation

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the modernisation of Southeast Asian FTAs. We represent six of Australia's leading animal protection organisations with a combined supporter base of over 2 million Australians. Our members include Animals Australia, Compassion in World Farming, Humane World for Animals Australia, World Animal Protection Australia, FOUR PAWS Australia, and Voiceless, the animal protection institute.

Animal welfare is of great concern to the Australian community and is an increasingly important component of sustainable development having implications for all three pillars of sustainability – economic, social, and environmental. International trade agreements play a major role in shaping Australian trade, industry and business practice on a range of matters, including standards of animal welfare. It is important that such agreements protect and promote practices that are consistent with Australian values and do not inadvertently undermine local standards of production consistent with Australian animal welfare regulatory requirements.

This should be considered and recognised in any trade agreement that Australia is party to. It is imperative that such agreements recognise the importance of animal welfare and promote continuous improvement in standards. Australia is well placed to be an international leader in animal welfare practices and should seek to capitalise on this comparative advantage and market opportunity.

The modernisation of Southeast Asian FTAs presents a significant opportunity for the Australian Government to demonstrate its commitment to high animal welfare standards and sustainable development practices.

Australia has recently concluded trade agreements with the United Kingdom (A-UKFTA) and the United Arab Emirates (A-UAE CEPA) with each recognising the importance of animal welfare in the following ways:

A-UKFTA

Article 25.1 Animal Welfare

1. *The Parties recognise that animals are sentient beings. They also recognise the connection between improved welfare of farmed animals and sustainable food production systems.*
2. *The Parties affirm the right of each Party to establish its own policies and priorities for the protection of animal welfare and to adopt or modify its laws, regulations and policies in this area.*
3. *Each Party recognises that it is inappropriate to encourage bilateral trade or investment by weakening or reducing its levels of protection for animal welfare. Accordingly, each Party shall endeavour to ensure that it does not waive or otherwise derogate from, or offer to waive or otherwise derogate from, its laws, regulations and policies in a manner that weakens or reduces its level of animal welfare protection as an encouragement for trade or investment between the Parties.*
4. *Each Party shall endeavour to ensure that its laws, regulations and policies provide for and encourage high levels of animal welfare protection and shall endeavour to continue to improve their respective levels of animal welfare protection, including through their laws, regulations and policies.*
5. *The Parties shall exchange information, expertise and experiences in areas of mutual interest in the field of animal welfare, with the aim of improving understanding of each other's approaches and regulatory systems and improving animal welfare standards.*
6. *The Parties shall continue to strengthen and build on their existing cooperation in the field of animal welfare, including on issues relating to the treatment of farmed animals, including by:*
 - (a) *encouraging cooperation on research in the field of animal welfare; and*
 - (b) *working together in relevant international fora on areas of mutual interest, including to promote the development of the best possible animal welfare standards and practices for animals farmed for food production.*
7. *The Parties encourage non-governmental bodies and persons of the Parties to exchange views, experiences and information as part of wider collaboration in the field of animal welfare.*
8. *The Parties hereby establish a Joint Working Group on Animal Welfare drawn from government representatives of the Parties responsible for animal welfare matters.*
9. *The Joint Working Group will, among other things, provide a forum for:*
 - (a) *cooperation on initiatives of mutual interest;*
 - (b) *reviewing developments in animal welfare;*
 - (c) *promoting high animal welfare practices; and*
 - (d) *information sharing, under this Chapter.*

10. *The Joint Working Group shall have its first meeting within one year of the entry into force of this Agreement, and thereafter at regular intervals as agreed by the Parties.*

A-UAE CEPA

Article 21.4

Animal Welfare

1. *Each Party shall endeavour to ensure that its laws, regulations and policies provide for, and encourage, animal welfare and shall endeavour to continue to improve its level of animal welfare protection. This commitment shall not affect the right of each Party to establish its own policies and priorities for the protection of animal welfare and to adopt or modify its laws, regulations and policies in this area.*
2. *The Parties shall continue to strengthen and build on their existing cooperation and information exchange in the field of animal welfare, including on issues relating to the treatment of farmed animals. To this end, the Parties may work together in relevant international fora on areas of mutual interest related to the welfare of farmed animals.*
3. *At the request of either Party, the Parties shall meet to discuss any issue relating to animal welfare and any mutual cooperation.*

Animal welfare is also likely to be recognised in a future FTA with the European Union should an agreement be reached. We commend DFAT negotiators for their initiative and dedication to securing positive animal welfare recognition in these negotiations.

Similar recognition and commitment to cooperation should be built into Australia's FTAs with Southeast Asian nations. This would demonstrate the Australian Government's commitment to positively influencing global standards of animal welfare and provide a forum for bilateral discussions to promote continuous improvement and to address any animal welfare issues that may arise in relation to products traded under such FTAs.

We trust our submission has been of assistance. We would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with relevant DFAT personnel to discuss these issues in further detail and to receive an update on the progress of the negotiations. I can be contacted on 0407 237 492 or jed.goodfellow@allianceforanimals.org.au to arrange a suitable meeting time.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Jed Goodfellow
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