



The Hon Michael McCormack MP

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development
Leader of The Nationals

Senator The Hon Simon Birmingham

Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment

The Hon David Littleproud MP

Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management

Senator The Hon Jonathon Duniam

Assistant Minister for Forestry, Fisheries and Regional Tourism

MEDIA RELEASE

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**SECURING FREIGHT ACCESS FOR AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL
& FISHERIES EXPORTERS**

A new \$110 million initiative will back Australia’s agricultural and fisheries sector by helping them export their high-quality produce into key overseas markets, with return flights bringing back vital medical supplies, medicines and equipment.

In addition, around \$10 million in Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) levies will also be waived for all Commonwealth fishers, ensuring they do not have to pay Commonwealth levies for the remainder of 2020.

Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack said the International Freight Assistance Mechanism would help secure freight flights into Australia’s key export markets.

“This will help restore key freight routes for our farmers until commercial capacity can be restored again,” Mr McCormack said.

“We are doing everything possible to help our high-value agricultural and fisheries exporters get their produce on airplanes and into overseas markets.

“Everything we are doing as a Government in response to this pandemic is focused on saving lives and saving livelihoods and we know our agriculture industry is key to this.”

Federal Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said the COVID-19 pandemic had led to major air freight shortages and had disrupted supply chains around the world.

“This temporary action will help Australian producers to protect the jobs of those who rely upon Australia’s export of safe, quality food into the world,” Minister Birmingham said.

“Getting our export sector back on its feet is crucial to reduce job losses through the crisis and a critical part of the ultimate economic recovery.

The Hon Michael McCormack MP

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“By getting flights off the ground, full of Australian produce, we’re supporting our farmers and fishers who have been hit hard by this crisis.”

Federal Agriculture Minister David Littleproud said this initiative would focus on high-demand agricultural and fisheries exports who have been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis.

“We’re backing our farmers by making sure they can get more of their high-quality product into overseas markets,” Minister Littleproud said.

“The more agricultural exports we can secure, the more regional jobs we can protect.”

Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries Jonno Duniam said the freight assistance and levy relief was a lifeline for Australian fishers.

“The fishing industry was one of the first hit when access to China was cut off in January, bringing many in the industry to their knees,” Assistant Minister Duniam said.

“Unlocking key international markets will get thousands of fishers, divers, deckhands and processors back on the job, and the levy relief will help to keep fishers financially afloat.

“Our seafood industry has been built on the back of some of the toughest and most resilient Australians, and this assistance will ensure that the sector can build a bridge to recovery.”

The International Freight Assistance Mechanism will initially focus on the key markets of China, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and the UAE, with four key departure hubs: Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

It will be overseen by Mr Michael Byrne, who has been appointed as the International Freight Coordinator General. Mr Byrne has significant international logistics experience as Managing Director of Australia’s two largest logistics companies Toll Holdings and Linfox plus as a non-executive director of Australia Post.

Mr Byrne will work with Austrade to help establish arrangements with exporters, airlines, freight forwarders and industry bodies plus oversee the mechanism’s operations including advising the Government of destinations, freight selection and prioritisation.

The initiative is part of the Government’s \$1 billion Relief and Recovery Fund to support regions, communities and industry sectors that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Further details are available in the International Freight Assistance Mechanism Fact Sheet.

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