



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Trade Sub-Committee

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 12 May 2015

Chair: Hon Bruce Scott MP

Deputy Chair: Maria Vamvakinou MP

Queensland exporter and a trade consultant to discuss Australia's billion-dollar trade with the Middle East

An exporter of a Queensland soil conditioner to the Middle East wants to share his ideas on growing trade with the region with federal parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade at a public hearing in Canberra on Wednesday 13 May.

The Trade sub-committee's inquiry into trade with the Middle East will also hear from trade consultant Cynthia Dearn, who recently returned from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as part of an Australian government trade mission.

The owner of the AustraBlend brand soil conditioner, Michael Farrar, sees the Middle East and its need for greater food security as an ideal market for his product. AustraBlend is derived from a minerals'-rich clay and is marketed as "turning desert sand into arable soil" by improving soil health and requiring less water and fertiliser to grow crops and also turf on new golf courses and football pitches in the Gulf states.

Mr Farrar's submission suggested modifications to government assistance to exporters through the Export Market Development Scheme and by making the Export Finance Insurance Corporation more accessible to smaller businesses pursuing new export opportunities.

Mr Farrar's submission also expressed concerns about the coordination and purpose of the different trade missions and visits by federal, state and also regional governments to the Middle East – especially to the popular UAE cities of Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Given that Australian companies lead the world in fields such as water technology, agricultural production and plant genetics, Dearn & Associates also believe Australia is well placed to capitalise on the region's growing need for food and water security as its population approaches 400 million by 2050.

Public hearing

Date/Time Wednesday 13 May 2015, 11:00 am

Location Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra

Organisations AustraBlend and Dearn & Associates

Live audio broadcast will be available at www.aph.gov.au/live

For media comment: contact the Trade sub-committee Chair, the Hon Bruce Scott MP on (02) 6277 4949 (Parliament House)

For background information: Further details about the inquiry, including the full terms of reference and how to contribute, can be obtained from the committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/jfadt or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 2313 or emailing jscfadt@aph.gov.au.