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Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: jsctig@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee members

UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Australia and the United Arab Emirates (the UAE CEPA). 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 Society International 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 and investment agreements play a major role in shaping Australian trade, industry and business policy and 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.

We were therefore very pleased to see animal welfare recognised in Article 21.4 of the 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.

This was an especially pleasing development considering it was the Australian Government that initiated and pushed for the inclusion of such recognition. Animal welfare has been recognised in Australian trade agreements before (see Article 25.1 of the Aus-UK FTA), but this was on the initiation of the trade partner. To see the Australian Government push for such inclusion on its own initiative demonstrates the potential for Australia to positively influence global animal welfare standards. Australia is well placed to be an international leader in animal welfare and should seek to capitalise on this comparative advantage and market opportunity in future trade negotiations.

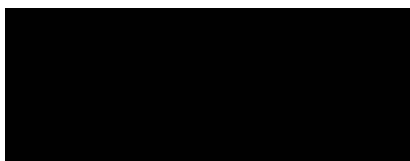
We commend DFAT negotiators for their initiative and dedication to securing this outcome and for the constructive way in which they engaged with our sector and members during the course of the negotiations.

Moving forward, we would like to see the Australian Government's approach to negotiating animal welfare in trade agreements formalised in policy. Principles and standards of animal welfare should be proactively embraced within Australian trade policy and consistently promoted to all parties with which Australia is negotiating trade and investment agreements.

We encourage Committee members to recommend that DFAT lead the development of an animal welfare trade policy in conjunction with the Australian animal welfare sector. This policy should include principles of animal welfare to which the Australian Government subscribes, a strategy for the Government's approach to negotiating animal welfare provisions in trade and investment agreements, and a formal framework for consultation with key animal welfare stakeholders, both in formulating a negotiating mandate and during the course of negotiations.

We trust our submission will be of assistance to the Committee. Should you require any clarification or further information, we can be contacted on 0407 237 492 or connect@allianceforanimals.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Jed Goodfellow
Director of Policy and Government Relations