



# Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig

## MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Senator for Queensland

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### Historic visit to open opportunities for Australia's agriculture industries

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Joe Ludwig, will travel to Vietnam and Thailand this week to strengthen ties and build trade opportunities for the agriculture sector ahead of the Asian Century.

Minister Ludwig will be the first Australian Agriculture Minister to ever visit Vietnam.

Minister Ludwig said the visit, which will take place a week after the launch of the *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*, supports the focus of making Australia a leading supplier to the growing Asian marketplace.

"I look forward to discussing new opportunities for Australian producers and exploring how our countries can work together to ensure food security in the region," Minister Ludwig said.

"Our trading relationship with South East Asia is very important to Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries, with exports to Vietnam and Thailand worth nearly \$2 billion last financial year alone.

"Over the next two decades the size of the Asian middleclass will grow from 500 million to 3.2 billion people. This will make Asia the world's biggest economic region.

"This growth represents significant potential for our primary industries. It's important we continue our close relationship with South East Asian countries such as Vietnam and Thailand who are already valuable trading partners."

Australian industry representatives will accompany Minister Ludwig, who will visit Vietnam from 4 - 6 November and Thailand from 6 - 9 November.

While in Vietnam Minister Ludwig will discuss the growing agricultural relationship with Ministerial counterparts and key business leaders.

He will advocate the importance of regional free trade agreements such as the ASEAN Australia New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), and will visit a number of food related businesses.

In Thailand Minister Ludwig will meet with Ministers and industry leaders to highlight the importance of agriculture in the ongoing review of the Thailand Australia Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA) and the review of Special Agricultural Safeguards.

Minister Ludwig will also visit Thai businesses that use Australian agriculture products as inputs to their manufacturing global value chain.

Australia continues to encourage reform of global agricultural markets through multilateral trade liberalisation, and bilateral and regional agreements complement these efforts.

Australia's FTA with ASEAN is Australia's first multi country FTA and our most ambitious trade deal to date. It is also the most comprehensive trade agreement that ASEAN has negotiated. Australia signed an FTA with Thailand in 2005.

Vietnam and Australia are negotiating the eleven-country Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). This important regional initiative aims to create a comprehensive, ambitious FTA that will eliminate tariff and other barriers to trade and investment.

The combined value of Australia's agricultural, fisheries and forestry exports to these two countries was worth more than \$1.975 billion in 2011-12. Australia's key export commodities to South East Asia include wheat, cotton, malt, beef, dairy, other animal products, and horticultural produce.