

[Restricted]

Office of the Minister of Agriculture

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to the Middle East 16 – 21 February 2019 (departing New Zealand on Friday 15 February and returning on Friday 22 February), primarily in my capacity as Minister of Agriculture, but also with links to my other portfolios.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle.

Purpose of Travel

- 3 I seek to travel to the Middle East primarily to attend and support New Zealand companies at Gulfood in Dubai. While in the region, I will undertake bilateral visits to Egypt **Intl relations** for a programme of targeted engagements with my agricultural and trade counterparts, **International relations**
- 4 Gulfood is the world's largest annual food and beverages trade show. My attendance at and participation in various events at Gulfood represents a specific and high-profile opportunity to heighten New Zealand's profile as a high-quality and high-value agri-food producing nation, and a committed trading partner. In the margins, I will undertake a bilateral programme of calls on trade and agricultural counterparts and stakeholders in the United Arab Emirates.
- 5 My visit to Cairo will be the first high-level New Zealand government visit to Egypt in ten years, and it is therefore an important opportunity to reinvigorate the New Zealand-Egypt relationship, advance our relationships with one of our most significant trading partners in the region, and provide momentum to progress a number of market access and agricultural cooperation work programmes.

- 6 **International relations**

Travel Background and Objectives

Gulfood

- 7 Gulfood, one of the largest food and beverage trade shows in the world, is a forum for food and beverage industry producers, retailers, manufacturers, and the wider hospitality industry to explore new products, innovations and trends in the sector, as well as future social and environmental challenges and opportunities. Around 5,000 exhibitors, including 120 country pavilions will participate in Gulfood 2019. While a significant number of attendees are from within the UAE, Gulfood has a regional reach with approximately 60 percent of the expected 100,000 attendees being international guests. Gulfood is estimated to generate US\$12.5 billion in food and beverage trade. Given its significance, Gulfood attracts a number of agricultural, food, and trade Ministers from around the world. The focus of Gulfood 2019 is 'World of Food, World of Good.' This theme aligns with New Zealand's positioning in the market, especially in the lead up to Expo 2020. The show will run from Sunday 17 to Thursday 21 February, and I plan to attend on Monday 18 February.
- 8 My focus for attending Gulfood will be two-fold: to undertake bilateral engagements and build rapport with counterparts from around the region, and to facilitate and raise the profile of New Zealand industry at the event and in the region.
- 9 Officials have advised me that there is wide 'New Zealand Inc.' support for a Ministerial-level visit to Gulfood, and that my attendance at the event would signal support to New Zealand industry as well as our partners in the region for our ongoing and highly valuable trade into the Middle East. I plan to attend and speak at a New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE) reception for New Zealand companies participating in Gulfood.¹

United Arab Emirates

- 10 While in the UAE for Gulfood I will seek a meeting with Sultan bin Saed Al Mansoori, Minister of Economy. Minister Al Mansoori is a good friend of New Zealand and is the Minister responsible for International Trade and Food Safety, crucial to our UAE market access priorities. This will be an opportunity to reinforce the positive state of the economic and wider bilateral relationship with the UAE (our 11th largest global trading partner); and to discuss solutions to an issue related to halal slaughter standards that is currently affecting our small but growing exports of poultry to the UAE.
- 11 I will also pursue a meeting with Dr Thani Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment. I was unable to meet with Dr Al Zeyoudi when he

¹ New Zealand companies confirmed as attending Gulfood include: ANZCO, AFFCO, Alliance, Silver Fern, Taylor Preston, Gara International, Sealord, Talleys, Florentines Bakery, Fonterra, Open Country Dairy, Westland, Dairy Works, Key Tone Dairy, Bakels, Lowe Corporation, Prolife Foods, Seriously Healthy Smoothies, Canary Butter, Beaut Bees, The Fresh Produce Company, Greenmount Foods, Zespri, Cloudy Bay Clams, Antipodes Water, Moana, and Whittakers.

was recently in New Zealand, and this meeting will be an opportunity to further engage with him on his work to reform the UAE's regulatory system with a particular focus on the nexus between food production, innovation, resource management, and sustainability. Given the UAE's role as an international trading hub to the wider Middle East and North Africa region, the success of New Zealand's two sanitary and phytosanitary arrangements with the UAE, for which Dr Al Zeyoudi has oversight, represents a solid platform from which to launch engagement with other Gulf countries.

- 12 I also intend to make a reciprocal call on Her Excellency Mariam bint Mohammed Al Mheiri, Minister of State for Future Food Security, who visited New Zealand earlier this year to learn about New Zealand's initiatives for increasing food security and sustainability. The Minister's primary role is to prepare a future food security plan (looking ahead approximately 70 years) for the UAE Cabinet to consider. The Minister reports directly to the Prime Minister, and I would like to take this opportunity to promote the role that policy and regulation can play in food security. This is also an opportunity to encourage the Minister to include reference in any future food security plan of the need for policy and regulation to facilitate trade and to be harmonised with international standards (which supports New Zealand's trading aspirations).
- 13 Further to these bilateral calls, I plan to take a tour of the Fonterra Hub Facility and Emirates Logistics Facility in Jebel Ali Free Zone. I have also been invited to attend and speak at a Fonterra reception.

Cairo

- 14 It has been ten years since the last economic-focused high-level visit by a New Zealand representative to Egypt, which is one of our closest relationships and most significant trading partners in the region. Given the burgeoning agricultural cooperation relationship between New Zealand and Egypt, as well as some outstanding market access issues, I intend to visit Cairo to meet with my counterparts, Ezz el-Din Abu-Steit, Minister of Agriculture (Animal Health and Plant Quarantine), and Amr Nassar, Minister of Trade and Industry.
- 15 Officials have identified value in engagement at the Ministerial level on the issue of progressing a citrus Import Health Standard with Egypt. Furthermore, Ministerial engagement will appropriately heighten the profile of and formalise the red meat supply chain integrity programme between Egypt and New Zealand. Finally, in my capacity as Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, a meeting with the Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry will set the tone for a productive New Zealand-Egypt. Finally, in my capacity as Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, a meeting with the Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry will set the tone for a productive New Zealand-Egypt Joint Trade Committee scheduled for the first quarter of 2019 in Wellington.

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International relations

Ministerial Party

- 17 I will be accompanied by one staff member, my Private Secretary (Agriculture).
- 18 Officials from the Ministry for Primary Industries and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (based in New Zealand Embassies in Egypt, United Arab Emirates or Saudi Arabia) will also attend these meetings; their travel costs will be met by the respective departmental budget.

Travel Costs

- 19 The estimated cost of travel is **\$54,230** broken down as follows:

Airfares:	\$ 34,700
Accommodation:	\$ 6,500
Meals, incidentals and communications	\$ 3,500
Ground transport	\$ 1,500
Airport facilitation	\$ 2,500
Ministerial gifts	\$ 600
Contingency (10%)	\$ 4,930

Total: \$ 54,230

Acting Minister

- 20 If my travel is approved, Hon Stuart Nash will act in my Agriculture, Biosecurity, Food Safety and Rural Communities portfolios.

Proactive release

- 21 This paper will be proactively released as per Cabinet Office Circular CO (18) 4, on the Ministry for Primary Industries' website. Proactive release is subject to redaction as appropriate under the [Official Information Act 1982](#).

Recommendations

- 22 I recommend that Cabinet:
- 1.1 authorise my absence from New Zealand, from 15 February to 22 February 2019 to travel to Cairo, Dubai and Intl relations
 - 1.2 agree that I be accompanied by one member of staff;
 - 1.3 approve the estimated expenditure of **\$54,230** for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
 - 1.4 note that I will be accompanied by officials from the Ministry for Primary Industries and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, whose travel costs will be met by the Ministry;
 - 1.5 agree that in my absence, Hon Stuart Nash will act in my Agriculture, Biosecurity, Food Safety and Rural Communities portfolios.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Damien O'Connor

Minister of Agriculture