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Office of the Minister of Agriculture

Chair, Cabinet

## **Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor: Travel to the United Arab Emirates (Dubai), Sunday 17 February – Wednesday 20 February 2019**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to the United Arab Emirates (Dubai), from Sunday 17 February to Wednesday 20 February. The purpose of this travel was to attend and support New Zealand companies at Gulfood in Dubai and undertake a programme of targeted engagements with my agricultural and trade counterparts in both the UAE and Egypt.

### **Report**

- 1 I visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 18 February 2019. While I had to return to New Zealand at short notice to respond to detections of fruit fly in Auckland, and was unable to complete the remainder of my planned UAE and Egypt programme, all planned Ministerial calls in the UAE went ahead.
- 2 In Dubai, I met with the **Minister of Economy Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri**, after attending Al Mansouri's opening address to a halal industry conference. This was a valuable meeting in which a range of issues were discussed, including investment and goods trade, current market access issues, and standards harmonisation.
- 3 I also met with the **Minister of State for Future Food Security Maryam Al Muhairi**, following her visit to New Zealand in August 2018, and sought an update on the UAE's Future Food Security Strategy. We also discussed the UAE's ambitions as an export hub, and to develop a 'food city'. One area for future discussion is New Zealand's technical expertise in agri-technology and the potential for partnerships with UAE entities.
- 4 A bilateral meeting with the **Minister of Climate Change and Environment Dr Thani Al Zeyoudi** presented an opportunity to discuss the role of the UAE as a hub for the wider Middle East and Africa region, and how our two countries can work together to facilitate greater numbers of New Zealand product on the supermarket shelves across the UAE.
- 5 Pivotal to my visit to the region, I met with each of the New Zealand companies exhibiting at the New Zealand pavilion in **Gulfood** and discussed business prospects in the Middle East and the effectiveness of the Dubai-hub model. As the largest food and beverage exhibition worldwide and with close to 100,000 attendees, Gulfood is an opportunity to showcase New Zealand product particularly to the Middle East and Africa region in one setting.

- 6 While at Gulfood, I met separately with **senior Fonterra representatives** to discuss their business model, challenges and opportunities across the region and the use of Dubai as a regional hub for re-exports via Fonterra's warehouse at Jebel Ali port. Later I met with a group of NZTE Beachhead Advisors and discussed the opportunities and challenges for New Zealand companies in the UAE and wider Middle East and North Africa region.
- 7 I also attended the **Taste New Zealand networking event** for New Zealand companies, their local partners and target customers, addressing 200 guests representing more than 60 New Zealand companies.

#### **Proactive release**

- 8 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](#).

#### **Recommendation**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Damien O'Connor

**Minister of Agriculture**