

Submission to Live Export Review Panel

A ban misses the real issue: Is there a shared inter-generational vision with customers for future meat requirements and animal welfare beyond current traditional markets?

From working in North Africa and the Middle East for a number of years there are some questions after studying the four reviews completed to date.

CONSULTATION – Customers and consumers.

1. What consultation with customer countries and the next generation of consumers has been undertaken? A study of the previous reviews showed:
 - a. While the previous reviews are comprehensive on what is required for animal welfare in our current traditional markets there has been very little published on any consultation with customers and consumers except the Farmer Independent Review.
 - b. All importing countries are signatories of the OIE and Australia should stop live export trade to countries in which the governments are consistently failing to apply the OIE standards.
 - c. **The proposal for a complete ban on Live Sheep Export misses the real issue.**
The issue is not the banning of live exports (finally well managed and on global standards at World Best Practice) as this does not address the real issue which is at the point of slaughter. The weak link in the supply chain is what was able to happen in some locations at the point of slaughter. Australia has the unique opportunity by facilitating a shared inter-generational vision on Animal welfare and Health and be part of a shared action plan.
 - d. There are locations that were slaughtering animals to the highest standard which stands as testament to the fact that the whole supply chain can work to an acceptable standard. (Dr Peter J Letchford submission to Farmer Review, p. 2)
2. Proposals for action regarding sheep meat, need to look forward, not just at our current traditional markets. Market projections for all sheep meat for the coming generation of consumers in particular is needed prior to ANY action.
3. Transition: Changes in live sheep export could be aligned with changes envisaged following consultation with customer countries – rather than an enforced direction from a political viewpoint. Customer countries are aware of global views and need the opportunity to partner change over perhaps a generation. The government power structures in many countries have largely been controlled by traditional older managers and leaders but generational change can occur.
4. Food security is a high priority in most of the customer countries and agreements such as free trade agreements remain a focus (source: DFAT 2021). Australia is in a special position to be able to help influence animal welfare but not with a blanket export ban that lacks global awareness and sensitivities and entirely misses the real animal welfare issues.

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TIMEFRAMES FOR TRANSITION – should there be socio-economic and cultural sensitivities?

1. The customer countries that would be affected in any transition are very traditionally based and most successful change occurs slowly. Change can occur if it is in partnership.
2. If political expectations are fitted to Generational timeframes overall success is more likely. There are cultural, social and economic sensitivities and also country sovereignty issues to external engagement requiring care however the future generations are much more globally aware and understanding of trading partnerships. Countries seeking food security are increasingly acknowledging the need to meet international standards.

SUSTAINABILITY – are there unintended consequences of isolated action?

- Australian sheep meat production is dominated by pasture fed livestock. Changes in Australian exports could result in more livestock having to be grain fed in other countries (often the customer countries). This would result in a net increase in GHG emissions (lower emissions efficiency of sheep meat production) that could offset the gains in transport efficiency from transporting processed meat only.

From the Farmer review: 2011:

The OIE Regional Animal Welfare Strategy: Asia, the Far East and Oceania (RAWS), was endorsed by the OIE International Committee in May 2008. The recommendations in the OIE RAWS Implementation Plan were endorsed in Bangkok in April 2010. The RAWS initiative is the first OIE regional animal welfare strategy and is being used as a model for OIE animal welfare strategies in other regions.

The RAWS Coordination Group aims to provide member countries with general guidance to help improve the welfare of animals through activities such as education, regulation, and research and development via the creation of a roadmap for the development of future animal welfare policies. A further aim is to assist member countries to establish priorities consistent with the goals of RAWS by facilitating their access to resources, including technical experience, scientific information and funding.

Conclusion:

The proposal for a complete ban on Live Sheep Export misses the real issue. The real issue is not the banning of live exports (finally well managed and almost all on global standards at World Best Practice) as this does not address the real issue which is at the point of slaughter.

See recommendations above on real action for animal welfare and realistic timeframes.

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