

Press release: Huge export win to China for UK food producers in England and Northern Ireland

A lucrative new export deal with China will bring a £200 million boost to the UK food industry and support 1,500 jobs, Food Minister George Eustice announced today.

Taking advantage of the growing demand for our food and drink in China, seven new businesses in England and Northern Ireland have secured access to export pork – including three producers who, in a first for the UK, will export pig trotters.

These new agreements will support around 1,500 jobs across the country and come after it was revealed this week UK food and drink exports reached £10 billion for the first half of 2017.

Food Minister George Eustice said:

“China is a hugely important market for our world-class food industry and by opening up access even further, more UK businesses can take advantage of the growing appetite for our food and drink.

“British food is produced to the very best standards of welfare, quality and safety and this growth in exports to China is creating more jobs and opportunities for our premium pork producers who can guarantee quality from farm to fork.”

Demand for our food and drink is growing in China, with the total value of exports rising by a third to £438m in 2016.

In particular, demand for UK pork has doubled in terms of value over the last three years. Nine producers already export to China and generated £43m last year.

The new agreements include approval to export from five sites in Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, County Antrim and County Tyrone – meaning Northern Ireland will take advantage of this export success story for the first time.

The announcement follows ongoing work by government officials and ministers in the UK and China. It was welcomed in Northern Ireland where the devolved administration has been working alongside Defra and the local pork industry to gain access to China. Northern Ireland’s Chief Veterinary Officer, Robert Huey thanked Defra for securing access. He said:

“This is very welcome news for the Northern Ireland pig sector and for our wider agri-food industry and I look forward to the commencement of exports to China. The deal represents a major boost worth in excess of £10m for the local pork industry.

“This follows concerted effort by Defra supported by the government and industry in Northern Ireland. By recommending approval, the Chinese authorities have recognised the rigorous standards Northern Ireland has in place to produce our high-quality, safe and wholesome pork. We place a clear emphasis on traceability at the heart of our production and processing and recognise that a joined up, safe and efficient food supply is essential.”

Northern Ireland Office Minister Chloe Smith MP said:

“I welcome today’s news that seven UK businesses, including companies based in Northern Ireland, have secured market access for the export of pork to China. It is an exciting example of what the Northern Ireland agri-food sector and, indeed, export market can be, and of what we can achieve in terms of trade, jobs and new opportunities as we build an economy that works for everyone.”

The UK industry’s high-welfare, quality-assured, sustainably produced stance puts it in a strong position in China, which is predicted to remain the world’s largest net importer of meat.

Dr Phil Hadley, AHDB’s International Market Development Director, said:

“We are absolutely delighted this new deal has been agreed with China, which will support jobs and create opportunities for UK pork producers for years to come.

“This agreement with China comes hot on the heels of this week’s announcement that a £34 million deal has been agreed to export UK beef to the Philippines. It is great to hear so much positive news around exports of UK meat and is a testament to the hard work being done to promote the UK food industry on a global stage.”

Notes to editors:

- For more information call Defra press office on 0208 026 3116
- To find out how to export visit www.great.gov.uk
- You can read the full International Action Plan for Food and Drink on Gov.uk here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-food-and-drink-international-action-plan-2016-to-2020>
- HMRC figures released on Thursday 10 August 2017 reveal total food and drink exports grew by 4.5% in 2017, compared to the first six months of 2016, to reach £10bn.
- Total pork exports to China, including offal, were worth £74m last year.
- This latest boost comes after the UK Government announced a £34 million export deal for UK-produced beef to the Philippines this week.
- Defra and AHDB worked in close collaboration with Export Certification Limited, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), DAERA in Northern Ireland, the FSA, Scottish and Welsh Government and the other UK levy boards to secure the deal, which was awarded when inspectors saw first-hand the UK’s high animal welfare and food safety standards.
- Trade from these sites will begin once the administrative processes at

both the Chinese and UK ends have been completed. Exports are expected to start within two to four weeks.

- These additional approvals are expected to be worth £200m of exports over the first five years of trade.
- The UK Government is committed to driving exports for UK produce. Defra's Food is GREAT campaign plays a key role in this, driving the demand for UK produce around the world and increasing positive public perception of our food and drink. China is one of the key markets in the International Action Plan for Food and Drink, which will see Government and industry working together to boost food and drink exports over the next five years.