

ExportNZ Trade News & Advocacy Update

September 2025

Trade & Export News Update

It has been a better month for New Zealand trade policy. There have been no new tariffs announced by the US directly affecting New Zealand interests. And there has been progress on several fronts.

NZ-UAE Deal in Force

The FTA with the UAE has now entered into force. There are strong outcomes for all sectors in the export community. ExportNZ has spoken to members of our food and fibre sector who are excited by potential growth in the market. We've also engaged with businesses in the Marine Industry and EdTech sectors, who should also be exploring the market and also possibilities in the wider GCC region.

This is a very high-quality FTA. Credit has to be given to the New Zealand officials who negotiated this deal and to the Minister of Trade and Investment, Hon. Todd McClay.

Saudi Arabia Trade Mission Complete

All feedback received on Minister McClay's trade mission to Saudi Arabia has been excellent. We look forward to the FTA with the Gulf Cooperation Council being signed and entering into force as soon as possible. This should lead to increased trade with the GCC and investment flows from this important grouping.

NZ-India Negotiations – Driving a Hard Bargain

The most recent round of FTA negotiations with India was held last week in Queenstown. As expected, negotiators say that the going was tough. But this is not a normal negotiation. This is highly political negotiation with both sides wanting a rapid outcome. Tough decisions are needed from India on how much liberalisation can be offered to New Zealand on dairy. And New Zealand needs to decide how much it can compromise on immigration policy and dairy to secure this very important deal. High level political noises on both sides remain positive.

CPTPP Accession Outcomes Possible

After underwhelming progress so far this year there is hope that CPTPP will achieve some outcomes before the end of the year.

Outcomes that are possible are:

- The conclusion of the general review of the Agreement;
- Conclusion of the Costa Rica Accession; and
- Agreement to launch working parties for some new accessions.

It seems that Indonesia, Uruguay, UAE and the Philippines are all potential contenders for accession working parties.

Thailand and the Republic of Korea are being talked about as possible members but no decisions on a formal membership application have been made by these governments.

Support for a dialogue with the EU continues to grow within the Group.

RCEP Gets Some Attention

We don't talk about the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership linking ASEAN, New Zealand, Australia, China, Korea and Japan, as much as some other agreements as the market access component of the Agreement is not as high quality as some other bilateral or regional agreements.

RCEP Ministers are meeting this week and there is potential good news pending. Accession applications have been received from Hong Kong, Chile, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are potentially very exciting markets for New Zealand (we already have FTAs with Hong Kong and Chile). Bangladesh's population projections look particularly exciting.

NZ-European Union Trade Goes from Strength to Strength

For those who doubt whether our trade policy efforts are worthwhile, a study of the impact of the EU FTA is interesting. New Zealand exports to the EU are up 45% - an extra NZ\$1.9 billion - since the Agreement came into force.

Trade & Export Advocacy Update

New Business Investor Visa to Support Business Succession (27 Aug)

A new Business Investor Visa will encourage more foreign direct investment and give New Zealand business owners greater succession options, says BusinessNZ Chief Executive Katherine Rich.

"This is a positive step in the Government's programme to support foreign investment and attract international expertise, and will help ensure greater business continuity, giving owners more choices for succession planning."

Mrs Rich welcomed the shift away from the previous entrepreneur visa model. "It's good to see the criteria focused on the skills and experience of the individual, without the overly prescriptive business plan requirements that were in place under the old system."

"Attracting global business skills and expertise will deliver real benefits to our economy and our communities," Mrs Rich said.

UAE Deal an Export and Investment Win (28 Aug)

ExportNZ says the first trade agreement between New Zealand and the Middle East will unlock a valuable region for Kiwi businesses looking to explore other markets.

The New Zealand-United Arab Emirates (UAE) Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) comes into force today. ExportNZ Executive Director Josh Tan says the \$500 billion market can deliver real value to Kiwi exporters and the NZ economy.

"The UAE imports most of its food (approx. 90%), and the region presents a huge opportunity for New Zealand."

"Consumers across the United Arab Emirates seek goods from industries which New Zealand is renowned for - things like dairy, red meat and more from our horticulture sector."

"For exporters of services, the CEPA will level the playing field, allowing them to compete more effectively with others in-market."

"In the past couple weeks I've spoken to members of other high value sectors, specifically the marine industry and education technology providers. They shared my excitement about the opportunities that the UAE market will present for manufacturing and tech exporters."

"Beyond exporting products and services to the UAE, the CEPA unlocks better investment opportunities back home in New Zealand as part of a deepening New Zealand-Emirati economic relationship."

"ExportNZ congratulates our New Zealand negotiators for their work in getting this deal finalised and into force in record time."

For more information, please visit the MFAT page on the Agreement:
<https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/trade/free-trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements-in-force/new-zealand-united-arab-emirates-free-trade-agreement>

End to Labelling Exemptions Requirements for New Zealand Food Exports (3 Sept)

ExportNZ supported the Government decision to remove the requirement on food exporters to apply for special exemptions from New Zealand rules if their products meet the requirements of the importing country.

The change reflects long-standing recommendations made by ExportNZ and food exporters. Simplifying labelling and composition exemptions has been on the agenda for some time, and we're pleased to see it addressed.

Currently, exporters have to navigate a costly, time-consuming process to secure approvals on a product-by-product basis. The new approach gives businesses more certainty, cuts compliance costs, and reduces delays. It's a change that will make a real difference to Kiwi exporters competing on the global stage.

The new guidance on the Ministry for Primary Industries Website can be found here: mpi.govt.nz/export/food/exempting-food-exports-from-new-zealand-requirements/

Government Increases Support for Thriving Games Industry (26 Sept)

From 2026, the Government will provide an additional \$2.75 million a year to the Centre of Digital Excellence (CODE) – twice their current funding. This will support more prototype, production, and travel grants for emerging game developers.

CODE's support for our gaming sector is highly successful. Typically, for every 1,000 pitches to publishers, in recent years only 1.6 per cent are securing signing deals. On the other hand, studios supported by CODE have an incredibly success rate of 40 per cent.

The industry earned \$513 million in 2024 and is projected to surpass \$750 million in 2025, with revenue on track to hit \$1 billion by 2027 – mostly from overseas sales.

Employment grew 29% last year – creating 321 more jobs – with studios like Grinding Gear Games and PikPok leading the way.

For more information, please check the NZ CODE website: <https://www.nz-code.nz/funding>