

[Restricted]

Office of the Minister of Agriculture
Office of the Minister for Food Safety

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Rome, Italy to represent New Zealand at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Ministerial Conference; Cairo, Egypt for a bilateral visit; and Sydney, Australia to attend the Trans-Tasman Ministerial Food Regulation Forum, from 20 to 29 June 2019.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle.

Purpose of Travel

Rome, Italy and the FAO Ministerial Conference

- 3 The FAO Ministerial Conference is held every two years, and is the premier global forum for dialogue on global agricultural policy and related issues. High-level attendance is particularly important given the work of the FAO in the strategically important areas of food security, food safety, plant health and sustainable development. Major priorities for New Zealand at this year's conference include participating in the election of a new Director-General, and delivering the New Zealand country statement outlining our priorities and interests in global agricultural policy and related issues.
- 4 During the Conference I will attend the opening plenary and the vote for the new FAO Director-General. I will also deliver New Zealand's country statement. I am also expecting to have bilateral meetings with counterpart Ministers from key trading partners, and meet with other Ministers of Agriculture in attendance from around the world.

Cairo, Egypt

- 5 While I was scheduled to visit Egypt in February 2019 as part of my travel to Gulfood in the United Arab Emirates, I had to return to New Zealand prior to commencing the Cairo leg of my visit due to the fruit fly response. My visit to Cairo will therefore be an important opportunity to reinvigorate the New Zealand-Egypt relationship, advance our relationships with one of the most significant trading partners in the region, and provide momentum to progress market access and agricultural cooperation work programmes.
- 6 It has been ten years since the last economic-focused high-level visit by a New Zealand Minister to Egypt. Given the burgeoning agricultural cooperation relationship between New Zealand and Egypt, as well as some outstanding

market access issues, I intend 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 while in Cairo.

- 7 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 Joint Trade Committee scheduled for later this year in Wellington.

Sydney, Australia

- 8 The purpose of my travel to Sydney is to attend the Australia New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation on Friday 28 June in my capacity as Minister for Food Safety. These meetings take place twice a year and I have attended previous meetings in person in November 2017 and June 2018. New Zealand will be hosting the next meeting in November 2019.
- 9 The Forum has overall responsibility for Australia and New Zealand's joint food standard setting system and is comprised of Ministers responsible for food regulation in New Zealand; the federal Government of Australia, and all Australian States and Territories. It is important that New Zealand has representation to ensure we contribute fully to decisions.
- 10 At the upcoming meeting, several issues of importance to New Zealand are on the agenda. This includes the Forum deciding on preferred options for improving sugar labelling on packaged foods, and agreement to proceed with modernising aspects of the regulatory system to ensure it is responsive and timely in its approach to considering issues. In addition, the Forum will also be receiving the report from the independent review of the Health Star Rating. I intend that my response to this will be considered by Cabinet later this year.
- 11 In addition, I also intend to meet separately with the Chair of the Forum to progress relevant bilateral issues.

Ministerial Party

- 12 I will be accompanied by one staff member, my Private Secretary (Agriculture).

Travel Costs

- 13 The estimated cost of travel is **\$56,408** and broken down as follows:

Airfares:	\$ 34,780
Accommodation:	\$ 5,500
Meals, incidentals and communications	\$ 3,500

Ground transport	\$ 1,500
Airport facilitation	\$ 2,500
Ministerial gifts	\$ 1,000
Events and hospitality	\$ 2,500
Contingency (10%)	\$ 5,128

Total: \$ 56,408

Acting Minister

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

Proactive release

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

Recommendations

- 16 I recommend that Cabinet:
- 16.1 authorise my absence from New Zealand, from 20 to 29 June 2019 to travel to Rome, Italy to attend the FAO Ministerial Conference; to Cairo, Egypt for a bilateral visit; and to Sydney, Australia to attend the Trans-Tasman Ministerial Food Regulation Forum;
 - 16.2 agree that I be accompanied by one member of staff;
 - 16.3 approve the estimated expenditure of **\$56,408** for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
 - 16.4 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

Minister for Food Safety