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The Hon. Tony Burke MP Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
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EXPORT INDUSTRY REFORMS BACK ON TRACK

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke today announced an agreement with Opposition and Greens senators to facilitate Senate passage of a \$127.4 million industry reform program. Working closely with the Opposition and the Greens, the Rudd Government has reached an agreement which will enable the Senate to reverse its previous decision from September to block new export certification fees and charges to return industry to full cost recovery. This decision will enable these significant reforms to proceed.

“This is the largest reform in a generation and has the overwhelming support of the red meat, dairy, grain, fish, horticulture and live export industry sectors” Mr Burke said.

“Industry and government have worked together to ensure Australia remains a world leader in export certification systems.”

“This program will cut red tape by updating IT systems helping to improve market access.”

“This is an industry worth \$30 billion annually to the economy and far too important to let political rivalries stand in the way of the reforms. I commend the Member for Calare, John Cobb and the Australian Greens for their determination in seeing the process through” said Mr Burke.

The reform program funds improvements to make export certification processes more effective and efficient, helping us respond to ever-increasing scrutiny from our export markets.

“In recent years, lack of progress in improving the regulatory system has impacted on market access for Australian producers to highly lucrative countries such as Russia and China” Mr Burke said.

The reforms will support the removal of substantial costs from the export supply chain for industry and AQIS, as well as progressing potential improvement in international market access across all commodities through intensive market access negotiations.

Specific initiatives include new regulatory arrangements with a focus on company audits rather than item-by-item inspection; off-site audits carried out remotely by electronically accessing a company’s data; increasing use of electronic processing rather than paperwork; and clearing grains for export much earlier.

“This program is forecast to reduce regulatory costs to industry by \$30 million a year from mid-2011 and those savings will be passed on to industry through reduced fees and charges” Mr Burke said.

Today’s agreement stems the losses and allows industry to regain its strong momentum towards reform.