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\$1B-plus non-tariff trade barriers must go: Winemakers

Non-tariff trade barriers cost Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) member economies and businesses over \$1 billion a year due to the complexity and inconsistencies of regulation, the APEC Wine Regulatory Forum has conservatively estimated.

Winemakers' Federation of Australia Strategy and International Affairs General Manager Tony Battaglione said non-tariff barriers cost Australian wine exporters dearly and prevent others from looking at potential offshore markets as growth opportunities.

The forum held its first meeting in Australia last week with some 80-plus regulators from APEC economies and it identified initiatives to help reduce the regulatory burden and stimulate a new era of wine trade across the Pacific-Rim.

"With different regulations in different APEC economies, exporting can be very costly, sometimes cost prohibitive for Australian wine producers," Mr Battaglione said.

"Our priority is to identify exactly what these inconsistencies and imposts are and then how to overcome them. We are making some sound progress in these areas," he said.

"We have agreed to look at regulatory coherence in the region. This ultimately involves harmonising export certification requirements, analytical testing requirements and maximum residue levels.

"Work is progressing in all of these areas and we expect recommendations to be presented at the intersessional meeting in Europe next year. Our expectation is to have a model export certificate in place and ensure it is digitised as a priority to fast track its uptake.

"In addition, a new working group has been set up to develop a set of Good Regulatory Practices. Australia will be taking a lead role in negotiations on this project which will investigate naturally occurring substances in wine so they can no longer be used as barriers to trade – something that can all too easily occur without a clear set of guidelines in place.

"Developing a model wine standard is another area the Federation has put forward. This work will provide APEC economies with new guidelines to follow when they review their own regulations so we can begin to standardise trade rules and remove non-tariff barriers from the ground up."

The Federation co-hosted the forum with the Australian Government. The next meeting will be held in Europe in March 2016.

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