



**Australian Grape & Wine Submission
to:
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
(JSCOT) inquiry into RCEP
April 2021**



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Who are we

Australian Grape and Wine Incorporated (Australian Grape & Wine) is Australia's national association of winegrape and wine producers. Our activities focus upon the objective of providing leadership, strategy, advocacy and support that serves Australian wine businesses now and into the future.

We represent the interests of the more than 2,500 winemakers and 6,000 winegrape growers working in Australia. Our role is to help forge a political, social and regulatory environment - in Australia and overseas - that enables profitable and sustainable Australian wine and winegrape growing businesses. These businesses make a significant contribution to underpinning regional economies by driving growth in jobs, regional exports and food and wine tourism.

Australian Grape & Wine's voluntary membership represents over 75% of the national winegrape crush. We represent small, medium and large winemakers and winegrape growers from across the country. Policy decisions by the Australian Grape & Wine Board require 80% support, ensuring no single category can dominate the decision-making process and guaranteeing policy is only determined if it provides significant industry benefit. In practice, most decisions are determined by consensus.

Australian Grape & Wine is recognised as a representative organisation for winegrape and wine producers under the Wine Australia Act 2013, and is incorporated under the SA Associations Incorporation Act 1985. We work in partnership with the Australian Government to develop and implement policy that is in the best interests of winegrape growers and winemakers across Australia.

Terms of Reference

This inquiry will inquire into and report on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

The Treaties Committee is empowered by its resolution of appointment to inquire into and report on 'matters arising from treaties and related National Interest Analysis and proposed treaty actions presented or deemed to be presented to the Parliament.'

As nearly all treaty actions proposed by the Australian Government are tabled in Parliament, this type of review activity accounts for much of the Committee's work.

The Committee invites interested persons and organisations to make submissions by 16 April 2021.

RCEP and Wine

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) is a key multi-lateral trade agreement which will provide benefit for the Australian wine sector. Its membership of Brunei-Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam represented around \$1.4 Billion in value for Australian wine exports in 2020. This is around half of the wine sector's total export value, which accounts for around 60% of the total sector's production.

Australia's grapegrowers and winemakers have benefited enormously from free and rules-based trading arrangements over many years. The sector is currently focused on diversifying markets and RCEP provides an opportunity for expanding and growing Australian wine exports throughout countries which are party to the agreement. RCEP helps to facilitate trade in these markets via a number of tariff and non-tariff measures. The agreement presents an opportunity to further liberalise markets across some of the most dynamic emerging markets in the Indo-Pacific region. It also provides a platform for strategic dialogue on mutually beneficial economic and trade issues in the future.

Furthermore RCEP presents further ongoing opportunity for India to join the agreement, which Australian Grape & Wine would welcome and support. As a key economy of the region and one with great potential for wine we continue to support efforts of RCEP members to build relations with India and encourage their participation in RCEP.

Conclusion

Free trade agreements, which address tariff removal and technical barriers to trade, are an important tool for liberalizing trade and ensuring the grape and wine sector will continue to support economic growth and employment throughout Australia, but particularly in rural and regional communities.

Australian Grape & Wine welcomes the opportunity to contribute comments on RCEP and we are highly supportive of swift and bipartisan ratification of the RCEP agreement through the Australian Parliament.

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