

Goods Market Access

New Zealand has existing free trade agreements (FTAs) with all Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) countries through a combination of bilateral and plurilateral FTAs, the latter including the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). RCEP will provide a single rulebook covering all 15 RCEP markets, which has the potential to significantly reduce complexity and compliance costs for New Zealand exporters.

In addition to the consolidating impact of RCEP, the Agreement improves on some of the existing rules to better address non-tariff barriers. For example, RCEP creates an expectation that customs authorities will release perishable goods such as seafood within six hours of arrival, including, in exceptional circumstances, release of such goods outside normal business hours, which should reduce spoilage and save exporters money.

RCEP also addresses some of the remaining tariff barriers from existing FTAs, in particular on some products of interest to New Zealand exporters into Indonesia (including liquid milk, grated or powdered cheese, beef, sheep meat, honey, persimmons, tomatoes and avocados).

RCEP's cooperation and transparency commitments provide a framework for ongoing improvements in goods market access. Examples include enhanced transparency on import licensing procedures, commitments on future tariff transpositions and exchanging of relevant verification information, future trade in goods discussions on good regulatory practice on measures affecting trade in goods and enhancing cooperation on the use of good regulatory practice.

The Agreement will provide an avenue for New Zealand to address future non-tariff barriers through a bespoke consultation mechanism with clear and predictable processes and timeframes. RCEP also includes a provision that allows for a future work programme for sectoral initiatives. Once implemented, this could see the introduction of sector-specific obligations aimed at reducing unnecessary barriers to trade in sectors of interest to New Zealand, such as wine and cosmetics.

The facilitative trade framework created by RCEP is likely to have a significant influence on the form and function of value chains across the RCEP region in the coming years and increase demand for New Zealand inputs in those value chains.

RCEP countries have also reaffirmed their commitment to the elimination of agricultural export subsidies and to work together to prevent their reintroduction in any form¹. This progresses New Zealand's long-standing aim to eliminate agricultural export subsidies globally.

¹ These commitments were made in the 2015 Ministerial Decision on Export Competition, adopted in Nairobi, Kenya.