



House of Assembly

Extract from Hansard
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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AND FRENCH RELATIONSHIP

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light)
(15:01): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. Minister, can you inform the house about the relationship South Australia shares with France in the food, wine and agricultural sectors?

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL (Mawson—Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Minister for Forests, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Recreation and Sport, Minister for Racing)
(15:01): I thank the member for the question, and—

Mr van Holst Pellekaan
interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Stuart is on his final warning.
Minister.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL:
Our state has had, obviously, a

long association with France, going back to Flinders and Baudin through to the First World War and the wonderful service that so many South Australians gave on the Western Front, and that is something that is not lost on the French. We continue to work with them across all portfolio areas because it has always been a strong—

Mr Knoll interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for Schubert is on his final warning.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: — relationship and one that we want to further enhance as we enter into a once in a generation deal that will give us a manufacturing base, with the 12 submarines being built and serviced here for the next 50 years.

Last year, I met up with the department of agriculture in France and worked on some collaborations that we can continue to do here. We have a lot in common. Obviously, we are both producers of very good wine and food. France has a ban on the growing of GM crops, one that it reinforced last year when all the EU nations got to decide on that. France was among the many that decided to stick with the prohibition on the growing of GM crops.

The other thing that we have, obviously, is French-owned companies that have major

investments in South Australia in the agricultural sector. Pernod Ricard is, of course, one of the three biggest exporters of Australian wine around the world, and it does a tremendous job in terms of getting South Australian wine out not just into France but into the rest of the world as well.

Parmalat, which has its offices down here and which produces milk, is owned by the French group Lactalis. Also, the iconic South Australian company R.M. Williams is now owned by Louis Vuitton, and I know that it has ambitions to take that wonderful footwear and fashion up into the premium level not just here in Australia but right around the world. So, these three companies are just a small example of some of the great collaborations that we can have with our friends in France.

In terms of exports, we export \$24 million worth of food and wine to France each year. Exports include oil seeds, almonds, onions, premium beef, lamb and kangaroo, as well as seafood, such as oysters, lobster and kingfish. We know that in the past there have been some barriers there towards all of Europe—not just France—in terms of getting our agricultural produce into the EU. I had a meeting with the ambassador to Australia and New Zealand from the EU two weeks ago, and he is keen to see some work progressed at that federal level.

Of course, as a state that is Australia's premium producer

of food and wine, a state that produces 80 per cent of the nation's premium wine, he thought it was important to come here and seek South Australia's view, and it's one that we have—that we will work together with the EU ambassador and our own federal government to work on anything that would be beneficial to South Australian producers. The more markets that we can open up, the better it's going to be for everyone.

Another French connection is through education and research, and we have SARDI (our South Australian Research and Development Institute) working very closely with the agricultural sector in France on ways that we can come up with better ways of packaging and better ways of farming that can benefit both countries. The VTT study we did last year is looking at taking our premium goods and turning them into luxury goods with the help of the French universities.