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Raw Deal – Sugar shortchanged in EU agreement

CANEGROWERS has slammed the outcome for sugar in the long-awaited Australia–EU Free Trade Agreement as a complete failure, saying it fails cane farming families and Australia's sugar manufacturers and falls well short of what producers had been seeking.

"This is a horrendous outcome for Australia's cane growers," CANEGROWERS CEO Dan Galligan said.

"For the past decade we have made our needs abundantly clear to the Australian Government and they have not delivered. There is no meaningful commercial access for sugar in this deal.

"The market access Australia has achieved is extremely small – less than 2% of Europe's import requirement and well below what Brazil and its Mercosur partners secured last year, which was around four times larger than Australia's outcome."

"Compounding this, the agreement delivers no growth, no pathway to expand access and effectively locks growers into a bad deal for the next generation.

"It's a capitulation to protectionist European sugar interests, plain and simple."

Mr Galligan said the outcome was particularly frustrating given the EU's ongoing need for imported sugar.

"The EU is a net importer of sugar and must bring in significant volumes each year to meet domestic demand.

"Australia can help meet that demand with high-quality, sustainably produced sugar, but instead we have been locked out."

Under the agreement announced in Canberra today, Australia will receive an additional 35,000 tonnes of quota access over three years – building on the longstanding 9,925 tonne allocation.

Mr Galligan said the scale of access fell well short of what was required to deliver commercial value.

"These volumes are not economically meaningful. They will not shift the dial for growers or materially change Australia's position in the European market.

"This is not what genuine market access looks like."

Mr Galligan said Queensland cane growers are among the most exposed to the global sugar price and receive no government support to buffer that volatility.

“This deal does nothing to change that position.

“We support trade liberalisation, but it has to be meaningful. Growers need outcomes that create genuine opportunity, not agreements that deliver nothing now and take us backwards when it comes to trade liberalisation.”

CANEGROWERS will review the full detail of the agreement and continue advocating for expanded global market access and fair-trading conditions for Australian sugar.

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