MINISTER
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Media Statement **8 September 2026**

MINISTER AUCAMP SIGNS PROTOCOL OPENING MARKET FOR THE EXPORT OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHERRIES TO CHINA

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr Wille Aucamp, has signed a landmark protocol granting South African cherry producers market access into China for the first time. The signing of the protocol took place during the 9th Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Ministerial Meeting in Beijing on 8 September 2026, where Minister Aucamp signed the protocol alongside Minister Sun Meijun of the General Administration of Chinese Customs (GACC).

“This achievement is record-breaking as it is the first time that two market access protocols have been signed with China within a year,” said Minister Aucamp. “We truly appreciate China’s efforts to speed up our market access requests for South African agriculture products.”

Speaking at the ministerial session, Minister Aucamp noted the excellent bilateral partnership and praised China’s role in advancing two-way trade in agriculture products. The Minister further commended the finalisation and signing of the Cherry protocol as a confirmation of the commitment made to increase and broaden trade under the Framework Agreement on Economic Partnership for Shared Development giving South Africa 0% tariff market access to Chinese markets.

The signing of the protocol will have huge economic benefits for South Africa, with China being the number 1 global importer of cherries. China’s total import of cherries is about 586 900 tons during 2025 valued at US$3,3 billion (R52,8 billion).

Minister Aucamp also had an opportunity to engage the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Mr Zhang Zhu on 7 September 2026. In the meeting, both Ministers reaffirmed their countries’ commitment to continue to collaborate on mutually beneficial areas such as biosecurity – especially Foot and mouth disease and securing more market access opportunities for South African agricultural products.

There was also an opportunity for Minister Aucamp to meet and engage with representatives of the Chinese fruit importers at the South Africa-China Fruit Trade Business Forum, organised by FruitSA. The opening of the Chinese market for cherries is expected to stimulate more investment in production adding about 600 new job opportunities, in line with the government’s priority of inclusive economic growth and job creation.

Minister Aucamp emphasised, “There is more to come between South Africa and China now that the negotiations to grant market access for South African blueberries to China are at an advanced stage.”

China has submitted a draft protocol for the import of blueberries for South Africa’s consideration and Minister Aucamp has requested team South Africa to fast-track the coordination of inputs and negotiations, with the view to finalize the protocol before the end of the year.

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