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Australian Apple Growers Triumph Over Supermarkets with China Trade Deal

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Australian apple farmers have secured a major victory against supermarket giants Coles and Woolworths, gaining access to China's lucrative market through a new biosecurity protocol signed in 2025. This article explores how the trade deal, effective from 2026, empowers growers, reduces reliance on domestic retail duopolies, and strengthens

Australia's position in the Indo-Pacific, amid concerns over the Labour government's trade priorities.

For decades, mainland Australian apple growers, producing 90% of the nation's crop, have been squeezed by the market dominance of Coles and Woolworths, which control 66% of domestic sales. Jeremy Griffith, head of government relations at Apple and Pear Australia Limited (APAL), told NewsWire, "Australian growers are very reliant on the domestic market, exposed to two buyers." Rising costs and supermarket pricing power have stifled profitability, pushing farmers to seek new markets. The 2025 agreement with China's General Administration of Customs, finalized during Prime Minister Albanese's visit, opens a \$380 million market for premium apples like Pink Lady and Fuji, following years of negotiations to address fruit fly concerns.

The deal, celebrated by the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA), offers growers a lifeline. AFPA CEO Claire McClelland said, "Securing access to China is a significant achievement, highlighting the value of stable trade with our biggest buyer." China's demand for high-quality, branded fruit aligns with Australia's clean, green reputation, with exports set to begin after the February 2026 harvest. Griffith emphasized the long-term strategy, noting the need to fine-tune apple varieties to meet Chinese preferences for "very red, very sweet" fruit. This shift reduces dependence on supermarkets, which a Senate inquiry criticized for forcing growers into uneconomic contracts.

While the Labour government touts the deal as a win for the \$680 million industry, X posts and Coalition trade spokesman Kevin Hogan question its broader trade agenda, particularly the failure to secure similar access for blueberries. Hogan called the apple announcement a

“reannouncement” from April, urging faster progress on other commodities. The deal counters the supermarket duopoly’s grip, criticized by the National Farmers Federation (NFF), and bolsters Australia’s trade resilience against People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy tensions. By tapping into China’s 1.3 billion consumers, growers gain leverage, ensuring economic strength and independence.