

## **Ireland's Food Industry Wants to Woo the Mideast Before Brexit**

Ireland's \$21 billion food and beverage industry is turning to the Middle East for sales as the U.K., its biggest buyer, prepares to move ahead with Brexit and leave the European Union.

The U.K. accounts for 43 percent of Ireland's agriculture exports, buying about 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) each of beef and dairy products a year, Agriculture Minister Michael Creed said Wednesday in an interview in Dubai. Ireland's biggest markets in the Middle East are Saudi Arabia, at about 135 million euros a year, and the United Arab Emirates, at about 60 million euros, with cheese and other dairy products leading sales in both, he said.

Ireland, an EU member, reached an agreement this week to sell processed, cooked, minced and bone-in beef to Saudi Arabia, Creed said.

No other country is feeling the pressure from the U.K.'s vote to leave the trading bloc more than Ireland. The U.K. is the top destination for the country's exports including Diageo Plc's Guinness beer and the Ornuia farm cooperative's Kerrygold butter made from the milk of grass-fed cows. Thirty years of EU quotas that limited milk production ended in 2015, leaving 18,000 Irish dairy farmers to look for new export markets to take in their growing output.

"Trade wars don't suit us," Creed said. "Trade missions in the context of Brexit take on an added imperative."

### **Western Diets**

Ireland wants to boost its agriculture exports to 19 billion euros by 2025 from 11 billion euros in 2016, he said. The Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia are attractive because of a growing middle class, Westernized diets and increased consumer spending, he said. China is now Ireland's second-biggest market for dairy and pork exports, after the U.K.

Creed is in Dubai this week after visiting China, Vietnam, South Korea, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Algeria in the last few months, he said. About 90 percent of his nation's farm output is exported. Its food and beverage industry has annual production valued at about 20 billion euros, said Tara McCarthy, chief executive officer of the Irish Food Board.

"We have identified hot spots around the globe that we see as offering significant potential," Creed said, highlighting opportunities in areas of the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia.

Ireland hasn't been able to take advantage of a trade deal it completed in October to export sheep meat to Iran because of difficulties in getting payments out of the country, he said. Iran can be a gateway for sales elsewhere, including Russia, which is currently closed to direct exports of some EU foods, including dairy products, due to sanctions.

"If we can get into Iran, the opportunities for re-export from Iran into other countries are significant," he said.

## 愛爾蘭食品業者欲搶在英國正式脫歐前 進軍中東

愛爾蘭價值210億美元的食品和飲料產業正轉向中東市場，因為其最大出口地英國，已進入離開歐盟的倒數階段。

2015年，歐盟解除了實施30年的牛奶生產配額制度，使1萬8000名愛爾蘭奶牛農民尋找新的出口市場，以取得增長的產量。愛爾蘭農業部長Michael Creed週三在杜拜的採訪提及，英國占愛爾蘭農業出口的43%，每年購買約10億歐元（11億美元）的牛肉和乳製品。然而，在面對英國脫歐情況下，該國面臨無比巨大的壓力。

愛爾蘭的農作物產量高達90%皆出口至他國，Creed在過去幾個月已拜訪數個中東、北非及東亞，包括中國，越南，韓國，新加坡，沙特阿拉伯，摩洛哥和阿爾及利亞。由於中產階級日益壯大，這些地區越趨於西化飲食，且消費支出增加，是具有潛力的市場。中國現在是僅次於英國的愛爾蘭第二大乳製品和豬肉出口市場。

在中東地區，愛爾蘭最大的市場是沙烏地阿拉伯，每年約1.35億歐元；阿拉伯聯合大公國約6000萬歐元。乳酪和其他乳製品在這兩個市場都有販售。Creed表示，希望在2025年時，愛爾蘭的農業出口從2016年的110億歐元增加到190億歐元。本周已達成協議，愛爾蘭將向沙烏地阿拉伯出售加工、熟製、切碎和帶骨牛肉等肉製品。