



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Aorere, Take Waonga, Take Tauhoko

54th Parliament

May 2026

Petition of Bianka Atlas: Ban the import and sale of foie gras in New Zealand

**Petition of Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere:
Require imports of animal products to meet or exceed NZ animal welfare standards**

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Petition of Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere Petition of Bianka Atlas

Recommendation

The Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee has considered the petitions of Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere—Require imports of animal products to meet or exceed NZ animal welfare standards—and Bianka Atlas—Ban the import and sale of foie gras in New Zealand—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request for imports of animal products to meet or exceed New Zealand animal welfare standards

This petition was signed by 8,042 people. It was presented to the House by Rachel Boyack on 6 May 2025, and requests:

That the House of Representatives require imports of any animal products to be produced to standards that meet or exceed New Zealand’s animal welfare standards.

Request for the import and sale of foie gras to be banned

This petition was signed by 349 people. It was presented to the House by Rachel Boyack on 6 August 2025, and requests:

That the House of Representatives passes legislation prohibiting the import and sale of foie gras.

We decided to report on these two petitions together, as they rely on much of the same evidence and make similar arguments.

Comments from the petitioners

We received written submissions from both petitioners, and we heard an oral submission from Mr Ferrere.

Both petitioners hold the view that allowing the importation of products that do not meet New Zealand animal welfare standards undermines those laws and standards, and is unfair to local producers. They told us that surveys of public opinion have shown strong support for their respective requests.

Ms Atlas cited international precedent set by India, which has banned imports of foie gras. Production of foie gras would breach New Zealand’s Animal Welfare Act 1999. She told us that a New Zealand ban on imports would affirm our reputation as a country that upholds high animal welfare standards, both at home and in our trade relationships.

Mr Ferrere told us that New Zealand could require imported animal products to meet New Zealand animal welfare standards either through an import or a sales ban.

Both petitioners told us that the actions requested could be justified under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, by citing the “public morals” exemption in Article XX(a) of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. As precedent, Mr Ferrere cited a WTO case challenging the European Union’s ban on the import and sale of seal products. The WTO Appellate Body ruling in 2014 accepted that the ban pursued a legitimate objective of public moral concerns about animal welfare.¹

We asked about the likelihood that trading partners would undertake retaliatory action. Mr Ferrere told us that he considered that the risk of trade retaliation was very low. Taking pork products as an example, he said that many of New Zealand’s trading partners already produce pork products that meet or exceed New Zealand animal welfare standards. They would simply be required to send that product, rather than product produced to lower standards. Other reasons he provided were the following:

- New Zealand products would represent a small, and likely inconsequential, fraction of a country’s (or market’s) total exports.
- If a country wished to retaliate in kind, it would have to lift its own domestic animal welfare standards first.
- To comply with international trade law, it would have to apply any new requirement equally to all its trading partners. It could not directly target New Zealand.

Comments from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) provided further context, telling us that New Zealand imports \$2.6 billion worth of animal products annually, representing 3 percent of the country’s total goods imports.² Exported animal products were worth \$40 billion and represented 53 percent of New Zealand’s total goods exports.

The risk of retaliation to New Zealand’s exports was a key point in MFAT’s written submission. In our hearing, MFAT told us that the risk “may not be great, but it cannot be discounted”. Retaliation may not necessarily be “like for like” and could instead take other forms, such as non-tariff barriers. While in theory countries’ actions were constrained by international trade law, that did not eliminate the risk of retaliation. MFAT said that implementing the requests therefore depended on New Zealand’s level of comfort with this risk.

MFAT told us its general approach accepts that countries will have different standards and processes according to their domestic context. It said that implementing the petitioners’ requests would invite greater scrutiny of New Zealand’s own welfare standards. It could make it more difficult to make New Zealand’s case should another country decide to impose standards that we in New Zealand might consider unwarranted; for example, some jurisdictions with colder winter climates than New Zealand require cattle to be housed in sheds over winter. People in those jurisdictions may consider the lack of such a requirement in New Zealand to be a lower welfare standard.

¹ World Trade Organization, *EC-Seal Products (DS400,401)*.

² In 2024, New Zealand’s foie gras imports totalled \$66,000.

MFAT also observed that although the EC-Seal Products WTO case cited by the petitioners found that animal welfare was a legitimate “public moral” ground, it ultimately found that the ban in question was discriminatory and a breach of trade obligations. Any attempt to create a “public moral” barrier for animal welfare standards for imported products would need to pass certain tests. The measure must be necessary, and it must not be applied in a manner that constitutes unjustifiable or arbitrary discrimination, or a disguised restriction on trade. MFAT said that there have been no WTO cases that deal directly with animal welfare concerns relating to farmed animals from which the traded products are derived, which would be analogous to the petitioners’ requests.

MFAT also told us that other bilateral and multilateral channels could be used to improve animal welfare standards, and this approach would be more consistent with New Zealand’s approach and way of working with trade partners.

Our response to the petitions

The question of how animal welfare standards might be applied to imported products is a topical issue. It is being actively discussed amongst the public both in New Zealand and in other countries. It is our view that there is a small but meaningful risk of retaliation by New Zealand’s trading partners if the petitioners’ requests were to be implemented. A majority of our members think that the risk is sufficient not to recommend that the petitioners’ requests proceed. Some of our members consider that this risk is sufficiently small that elements of the requests could be tested.

On balance, we consider it unreasonable to expect other jurisdictions to be bound by standards that New Zealand has set for itself, and we accept the resulting disparity between jurisdictions. In particular, we do not think it is reasonable to accept other jurisdictions to update their welfare standards every time New Zealand changes its welfare standards, even though in some instances this may hold New Zealand producers to a higher standard.

We encourage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Ministry for Primary Industries via its participation in the World Organisation for Animal Health, to continue to promote animal welfare among New Zealand’s trading partners. We also think that consumer choice, supported by country-of-origin labelling, could help promote animal welfare.

We thank both petitioners for their submissions and engagement with us.

Appendix

Committee procedure

We met between 17 July 2025 and 28 May 2026 to consider the petition of Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere, and between 9 October 2025 and 28 May 2026 to consider the petition of Bianka Atlas. We received written submissions from both petitioners, and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Ministry for Primary Industries. We heard oral evidence from Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere on 23 October 2025, and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on 20 November 2025.

Committee members

Tim van de Molen (Chairperson)
Tim Costley
Hon Peeni Henare (until 15 March 2026)
Dana Kirkpatrick
Laura McClure
Hon Damien O'Connor
Teanau Tuiono
Vanushi Walters (from 25 March 2026)

Steve Abel and Barbara Kuriger also participated in our consideration of this petition.

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to these petitions are available on the Parliament website at the following links:

- Petition of [Bianka Atlas](#)
- Petition of [Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere](#).

Recordings of our hearings can be accessed online on the Parliament website at the following links:

- [Hearing with Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere on 23 October 2025](#)
- [Hearing with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on 20 November 2025](#).