

China Horse Fair
Beijing, 14 October, 2015
Opening Remarks by the Ambassador of Ireland
H.E. Paul Kavanagh

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

As Ambassador of Ireland to China, I am delighted to address you at the opening of this, the ninth annual edition of the China Horse Fair.

I congratulate the Fair's organisers and managers, because each year it goes from strength to strength.

Ireland, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the land of the Horse!

The Horse has a very special place – and has had for thousands of years - in the heart, the culture and the way of life of the Irish People.

Ireland's horse industry is in the very front row of national horse industries in the world.

Horse lovers and experts around the world, when they think of first class horses, of champion thoroughbreds, of winning sports horses, of friendly, calm and faithful pleasure horses, they automatically think of Ireland.

And more and more each year, horse lovers and experts, right here in China, also think of Ireland when they want to have the best, the fastest racers, the highest jumpers, the most staying eventers, or indeed, the most stable pets for their families.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ireland – the Green Island, the Clean Island, the Fresh Island, is also the Horse Island. It holds a pre-eminent position in the **thoroughbred racing and breeding** world.

Ireland is the largest producer of thoroughbred foals in Europe, and the fourth largest producer in the world. Over 40% of the EU output of thoroughbreds and 11% of the worldwide total each year are produced in Ireland.

And it is not just quantity. Irish Thoroughbreds are of the very highest quality. For example, five of the last nine Epsom Derby winners were Irish bred. Five of the last eight Epsom Derby winners were Irish trained. Seven of the top ten horses in Hong Kong at the end of the 2014/2015 season were all – you guessed it – bred in Ireland.

Over the years, many of the world's leaders have based their bloodstock interests in Ireland. These include, to name only a few:

- Sheikh Mohammed Al Makhtoum;
- His Highness the Aga Khan;
- Sheik Hamdan Al Makhtoum; and
- Prince Khalid Abdullah.

We in Ireland fortunately have all the elements required to underpin world class racing:

- A temperate climate;
- excellent grassland
- top-class bloodstock;
- a workforce that - together with a community of owners, trainers and breeders – has a reservoir of tradition, experience, expertise and instinct which has been built up over generations and is unparalleled in the world.

Dear Chinese friends,

Irish Thoroughbred Marketing is your link to the world of Irish thoroughbreds and to Irish thoroughbred sales.

An Irish thoroughbred champion that you buy as a 2-year old in Ireland and which you train in Ireland, is your passport to the prestige and glamour of the winners' enclosures of Ascot, Epsom, Longchamp, Kentucky and Melbourne.

Irish Thoroughbred Marketing can get you there as a winner. Irish Thoroughbred Marketing has a permanent representative here in Beijing. Their global CEO, Mr. Charles O'Neill, has travelled to join us today. Please do talk with them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When it comes to **Sports Horses**, perhaps you know already that the Irish Sport Horse Studbook in 2014 was at the top – in first place – of the World Breeding Federation's studbook ratings. As for Eventing, the Irish Sport Horse Studbook has taken the top spot in the international rankings for 20 of the past 21 years.

At the World Equestrian Games in 2014, some 32 Irish bred horses competed, representing 15 nations in the disciplines of Eventing, Show Jumping and Para-Dressage. Irish Sports horses not only win medals for Ireland; they do so regularly for Great Britain, Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, and a host of other countries.

I believe that it is time for Irish-bred Sport Horses to begin to win international medals for China.

The Irish Horse Gateway – a subsidiary of Horse Sport Ireland – is also participating in this Beijing Horse Fair. Its mission is to connect Chinese buyers to sellers of Irish horses and ponies. You may want to talk to Irish Horse Gateway. They will be here throughout the Fair this week.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given that Irish horses are world leaders, it is perhaps not surprising that Ireland has developed an entire ecosystem of top class companies which provide support products and services for Ireland's horse sector.

Many of these Irish companies are world leaders in their field and they supply their products and services to the world, including to China. You will find a number of these specialist Irish companies on the Ireland stand at this, China Horse Fair. Right down there! They represent an Irish equine industry that is substantial, vibrant and growing. They have been led here by my colleagues from Enterprise Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland is the Irish Government Agency responsible for the development of world class Irish companies to achieve strong positions in global markets.

Irish companies participating these days in the ninth China Horse Fair are showcasing Ireland's comprehensive product offer to the equine market in China.

Connolly's Redmills is a multi-generational Irish specialist company, a leader in science and research that has become a world leader in high performance horse nutrition. Connolly's Redmills horse feeds are exported to over 50 countries – and the company is the only one currently registered by China's Ministry of Agriculture and AQSIQ to import feed from overseas into China

Horseware Products produce horse rugs, equestrian clothing and accessories of the highest quality which are exported to all parts of the world, including, of course, to China

Bimeda develop and manufacture animal health products for horse owners and veterinarians in 75 countries worldwide, including – and growingly, China.

Thoroughbred Remedies Manufacturing (TRM) develop and manufacture highest quality nutritional feed supplements for horses.

Bucas are world leaders in intelligent horse rugs, covers and clothing. Yes, you heard me right. Intelligent! This is because of built-in temperature control, water resistance and so forth. Intelligent – and also good looking!

You will also see representatives of Select Ireland. They are promoting Clonshire House, one of Ireland's best equestrian centres. They provide tailored programmes and services to Chinese clients for professional training, unique summer camp experiences, leisure riding and buyer assistance.

The Ireland Stand – via the representative of Horse Sport Ireland - can also connect Chinese friends to:

- Ireland's leading universities and other providers of equine professional learning courses, and to;
- World class Irish companies for architecture and the design of state of the art equine premises.

The list is endless.

The areas for further cooperation in the equine sector between Ireland and China are vast!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, I would like to mention the Irish Equine Centre which is world renowned for its excellence in veterinary support and the provision of best equine diagnostic and forensic science.

The work of the Irish Equine Centre in guaranteeing the disease free status of Irish stallions is of fundamental importance to overseas breeders who send their most valuable mares to be covered by stallions standing in Ireland.

The services of the Irish Equine Centre are available to foreign mares and foals, and to all other horses from any country.

I am pleased to say that the Irish Equine Centre has a thriving, OIE-approved twinning partnership with the National Harbin Veterinary Research Institute of China. Ms Anne Cullinane, Head of Virology at the Irish Equine Centre will give a presentation here at the Fair on control of equine viral diseases.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The China Horse Fair is now firmly established as China's most important and respected gathering for industry professionals who are involved in all forms of equine sport and leisure activities.

It is very appropriate that Ireland, the Horse Island, home of Thoroughbred and of Sport Horse champions, source of world class equine products and services, should be represented, and strongly represented here. Please do engage with our many representatives.

Apart from anything else, let me tell you that not only do Irish people and Irish companies love to come to China and to do business here. In addition, who can question that Irish horses too love to come here, to breed here, to compete and win in China, and to provide pleasure to Chinese people of all generations?

My renewed good wishes to you all from Ireland – LAND OF THE HORSE – for success at the China Horse Fair, 2015!

Xie Xie Da Jia.