**US & CHINA STILL TALKING:** A trade deal has still to be reached despite talks in Washington DC last week. President Trump, meeting with China’s Vice Premier Liu, said a summit with President Xi would be held when a deal was reached, possibly in May. Enforcement mechanisms and tariffs remain stumbling blocks.

**AUSTRALIA BOOSTS EXPORT SUPPORT:** Australia is boosting support for small-to-medium exporters by investing an extra $60 million over 3 years into its Export Market Development Grant Scheme. Its total annual spend will now be $158 million. Last year, more than 3500 SMEs accessed the scheme.

**NEW ZEALAND & CHINA SEEK TO RESUME FTA-PLUS TALKS:** A first round of 2019 negotiations to upgrade the NZ-China FTA are expected soon following Prime Minister Ardern’s meeting with Premier Li in Beijing last week. Negotiations to upgrade the FTA, first signed in 2008, began in 2017.

**CANADA LOOKING FOR NEW CANOLA MARKETS:** Trade Minister Carr says Canada is looking to divert canola shipments following restrictions placed on its exports to China. The restrictions follow quality claims by China. He was discussing the possibility of increasing canola shipments with other markets.

**AUSTRALIAN TRADE AGREEMENTS AWAIT NEW PARLIAMENT:** As an election nears in Australia, three signed free trade agreements remain unratified and will now be considered by the next Parliament. The FTAs are with Indonesia, Peru and Hong Kong.

**GLOBAL TRADE GROWTH SLOWING:** The WTO is forecasting a slowing in global trade growth. Its director-general Azevedo has forecast trade growth in 2019 of 2.6% compared to 3% last year and 4.6% in 2017. He said trade could not play its full role in driving GDP growth when uncertainty levels were so high.

**MALAYSIAN TRADE MINISTER IN DC:** Trade Minister Leiking was in the US during the week where he held high-level trade talks with Commerce Secretary Ross and US Trade Representative Lighthizer. Leiking was seeking to improve trade relations between the two economies.

**AUSTRALIA BANS SUMMER SHEEP EXPORTS:** The Agriculture Department has backed an industry ban by regulating a live sheep export ban to the Middle East during the hot months of June, July and August. It says the ban is based on welfare grounds. Export rules for September and October have still to be finalised.

**EU TARGETS INDIAN TARIFFS:** The European Union has launched dispute action at the WTO claiming tariffs charged by India on ICT products, including cell phones, were in breach of global trade rules. A similar case was also launched against Turkey regarding local manufacturing rules for pharmaceuticals.

**PHILIPPINES SEEKS CLOSER EUROPEAN TRADE TIES:** The Philippines sought to boost its European trade ties during the week with joint economic commission meetings between the ASEAN economy and senior trade officials in both Hungary and the Czech Republic.