AUSTRALIA LIFTS TOMATO DUTIES: After initially postponing a decision on the future of anti-dumping duties on prepared or preserved tomatoes from Italy, Industry Minister Andrews accepted a report by the Anti-Dumping Commissioner and signed an order not to extend the 5-year-old duties beyond April 16.

US-JAPAN TALKS START: Trade negotiators, led by USTR Lighthizer and Economy Minister Motegi, held a 1st round of bilateral negotiations in Washington DC during the week. Further to discussions on goods, agriculture and digital trade, US negotiators complained of a near $US68 billion trade deficit with Japan.

AUSTRALIA SEEKS INDUSTRY VIEWS ON TRADE PAPERWORK: The Department of Agriculture is seeking industry views on its minimum documentation and import declaration requirements. It is reviewing the policy to accommodate changes in food inspection documents and updated fumigation terminology.

CHINA MAY CHALLENGE BAN: China may take dispute action at the WTO on Australia’s ban on Huawei 5G equipment. It raised the ban at the WTO’s Council for Trade in Goods on April 11. China’s strident Global Times has subsequently suggested Australia was bound to pay the price for its unwise decisions.

WTO PANEL TO REVIEW DUTIES ON THAI AIR CONDITIONERS: The WTO has agreed to establish a Dispute Panel to rule on duties imposed by Turkey on air conditioners imported from Thailand. Turkey imposed the extra duties in protest at safeguard duties first imposed on steel products by Thailand in 2014.

EU EXCLUDES FARM PRODUCTS FROM TALKS: The European Council has given the green light for EU trade negotiators to begin high-level trade talks with the US. The Council’s mandate requires the negotiators to strictly focus on eliminating tariffs on industrial goods. Agricultural products are to be excluded.

RCEP FEATURES IN TALKS: Negotiations to conclude the RCEP (ASEAN + 6) trade deal received a push along in two forums during the week. A moving forward of the negotiations was raised in the ASEAN-India Officials Summit and the China-Japan Economic Dialogue. A 26th negotiating round will be held in June.

KIWI CONFIRMED AS CHAIR OF WTO BODY: New Zealand trade diplomat David Walker has been formally elected as chair of the WTO’s Dispute Settlement Body. He succeeds the former Thai chair of the body Ambassador Kangvalkulkij at a time of considerable challenge for the WTO’s dispute settlement processes.

AUSTRALIA TIGHTENS US FRUIT BIOSECURITY: The Department of Agriculture has flagged it may order the destruction or re-export of fresh citrus fruit from the US where split or damaged fruit was detected on arrival. This follows the discovery of spotted wing drosophila in US oranges imported into New Zealand.

PHILIPPINES SECURES UK POST-BREXIT DEAL: The Philippines says it has secured a trade commitment from the United Kingdom to enjoy its current level of market access under any post-Brexit scenario. Trade Secretary Lopez said the retention of a preferential tariff access was a huge assurance for exporters.