CANADIAN WHEAT HEADS TO AUSTRALIA: The Australian Department of Agriculture has approved a bulk shipment of Canadian wheat for import. It said the approval for the single shipment would be subject to strict biosecurity rules. Australia is usually one of the world’s largest wheat exporters.

US & CHINA CONTINUE TRADE BATTLES: As nervousness spread through global markets, the trade battles between China and the US have continued with a series of twitter-posts, strong statements and promised tariff hikes. President Trump and President Xi are to meet at the G20 Summit in Osaka in June.

EU NEGOTIATORS TALK IN WELLINGTON: Negotiators from the EU were in New Zealand last week for a 4th round of FTA negotiations. It was the second negotiating round of 2019 as political leaders seek an agreement by year-end. A 4th round of the Australia-EU FTA negotiations will be held in Brussels in July.

JAPAN CHALLENGES INDIAN TARIFFS: India’s contentious trade policies are facing further challenge at the WTO. Japan has launched dispute action claiming India has levied tariffs of up to 20% on a wide range of ICT goods including cell phones in contravention to the zero bound tariff it committed to at the WTO.

APEC FOUNDER DIES: Former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke, a key founding leader of APEC in 1989, died on May 16. He was 89. A former trade union leader, Hawke was Prime Minister from 1983-1991. In partnership with Treasurer Paul Keating, he led significant reforms of the Australian economy.

ASEAN BOOST FOR HONG KONG: A Hong-Kong-ASEAN FTA will be progressively implemented from June 11. It will initially cover Singapore Thailand and Myanmar. The FTA will cover other ASEAN economies once ratification procedures are completed.

PALM OIL DRIVES TRADE FRICITION: Palm oil friction continues to hang over trade negotiations between the European Union, Malaysia and Indonesia. The EU is proposing the ban the use of palm oil in biofuels. Malaysia has threatened retaliatory measures. An 8th round of EU-Indonesian FTA talks is due in June.

AUSTRALIAN FRUIT GETS US CLEARANCE: The US has given clearance for Australian produce from Northern Tasmania and the Loxton area of South Australia to be imported under pest-free conditions. This follows the recent eradication of Queensland fruit fly from these regions.

NEW TRADE COUNCIL PROPOSED: Australia’s governing Liberal Party went to the weekend election with a promise to boost trade-generated new jobs by 240,000 over 5 years, to establish a new Ministerial Advisory Council for new FTAs and to require bureaucrats to report annually on trade outcomes by market.

MINISTERS URGED TO SPEAK-UP: Developing economy trade ministers have been urged to speak-up. WTO director-general Azevedo told ministers at a forum in India last week the trade body had to become better, faster and more responsive. “This is your organization – make your voices heard in this debate.”