



USDA & USTR react strongly to Taiwan's threat to re-impose a ban on U.S. beef & beef products

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Washington, Dec. 30 – Responding to public protests over the Taiwanese President's decision last October to end a ban on U.S. ground beef, bone-in beef and offal, Taiwan's legislature plans to pass a law Jan 5th to reinstate the ban. The protests were sparked by public fear that U.S. beef imports could introduce mad cow disease. President Ma Ying-jeou's office has indicated that the president will accept the ban's reinstatement if the legislature votes to reverse his earlier decision to end the ban.

Responding to the Taiwanese action which puts at risk U.S. beef imports to Taiwan which totaled \$128 million in 2008, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of the United States Trade Representative released a statement Tuesday on the Taiwan Legislative Yuan's completion of initial steps toward passing a Food Sanitation Act amendment which would bar import of some U.S. beef and beef products. The following statement is from USDA Undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Jim Miller and Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Demetrios Marantis:

"We are deeply concerned and disappointed by reports that Taiwan's Legislative Yuan has taken initial steps toward the passage of an amendment to the Food Sanitation Act that contains provisions that would unjustifiably bar the import of certain U.S. beef and beef products.

"This amendment's provisions do not have a basis in science or fact and thus in no way serve to protect Taiwan's food supply. If passed, this amendment would represent a new barrier to U.S. beef exports to Taiwan, and would constitute a unilateral abrogation of a bilateral agreement concluded in good faith by the United States with Taiwan just two months ago. The Taiwan authorities should consider very carefully the impact that passage of the amendment in its current form would have on Taiwan's reputation as a reliable trading partner and responsible member of the international community. Science and facts - not politics or hyperbole - should govern our trade and economic relations.

"The United States has implemented a comprehensive set of measures, regulations, and practices that are science-based, consistent with the guidelines of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) for minimizing the risk posed by BSE. The OIE is recognized

by the World Trade Organization (WTO) as the relevant standard-setting body for regulations relating to animal health. These measures allow us to ensure consumers in the United States, Taiwan and elsewhere that U.S. beef and beef products – including offals and ground beef – are safe, and millions of American families enjoy these products every day.

“We have worked closely with Taiwan to provide all information necessary for Taiwan to fully evaluate these measures in the preparation of the Department of Health’s final risk assessment, which determined that U.S. beef and beef products are safe. In the interests of science-based trade with Taiwan, the United States has provided research, data, scientific experts, technical assistance, as well as detailed information regarding U.S. risk mitigation measures, all of which have underscored the safety of the relevant U.S. beef and beef products.

“After over two years of extensive negotiations and scientific and technical exchanges, we concluded an agreement, the ‘Protocol of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)-Related Measures for the Importation of Beef and Beef Products for Human Consumption from the Territory of the Authorities Represented by the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT),’ on expanded market access for U.S. beef and beef products. The Protocol is science-based, consistent with the OIE guidelines, the domestic legal obligations of both sides, as well as the findings of Taiwan’s own risk assessment. The Protocol thus provides further assurances that U.S. beef and beef products to be exported to Taiwan, which are the same products that are consumed by Americans at home, are safe.

“This is a serious matter that concerns us greatly and we are monitoring the legislative process very closely.”

The Taiwanese president’s office also considers the situation serious and noted in a statement that the government hopes to “minimize damage to avoid overwhelming impact on the Taiwan-U.S. relations.” Lifting the ban last October reportedly was done in an effort to restart talks on a free trade agreement with the U.S. Those talks ended in 2007 largely due to Taiwan’s ban on imports of U.S. bone-in beef.

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