



Sens. Lincoln & Johanns call on Japan to end ‘unscientific’ restrictions on U.S. beef

By Stewart Doan

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Washington, March 11 – Sens. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Mike Johanns (R-NE) introduced a resolution Thursday pressing Japan to lift its partial ban on U.S. beef. The resolution, which has 17 bi-partisan cosponsors, calls attention to the Japanese government’s “arbitrary” and “unscientific” restrictions on American beef and urges the Obama administration to insist on increased market access.

Following a detection of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in the U.S. in 2003, Japan closed its borders to U.S. beef. Currently, Japan only allows boneless beef products from cattle under 21 months of age, which limits American beef sales to only about 25 percent of the potential market.

American beef producers have been losing about \$1 billion annually because of this ban, according to the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA). “Asia continues to hold the greatest growth potential in market access for American beef exports and these non-tariff trade barriers from Japan must be brought down,” Lincoln, Chair of the Senate Ag Committee, said.

The World Organization for Animal Health has classified the United States as a controlled risk country for BSE, meaning that U.S. beef is safe for export and consumption.

“We have proven that U.S. beef is safe for consumption,” Johanns, a Bush-era Secretary of Agriculture, said, adding, “Japan must recognize that fact and remove its non-scientific barriers to our beef sales.”

NCBA commended Lincoln and Johanns for offering the resolution and echoed the lawmakers’ call for administration action to end the ban immediately. “Japan’s trade restrictions are completely unjustified,” stated NCBA President Steve Foglesong. “In this economy, we simply cannot afford to allow our closest trading partners to unfairly restrict market access.”

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