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BAUCUS, HATCH, CAMP, LEVIN URGE TAIWAN TO END UNSCIENTIFIC RESTRICTION ON AMERICAN BEEF EXPORTS

Congressional Leaders Call on Taiwan President to Take Action to Restore Beef Trade

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-Mich.) and House Ways and Means Committee Ranking Member Sander Levin (D-Mich.) sent a letter today to Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou calling on him to end Taiwan's recently imposed unscientific restriction on U.S. beef. Despite guarantees from international food safety organizations and assessments made by Taiwan's own government that American beef is 100 percent safe for consumption, the new restriction, which is based on false claims of health risks, has effectively blocked U.S. beef exports to Taiwan.

"Taiwan's unscientific restriction on U.S. beef is completely unjustified and must end immediately," said Baucus. **"We must insist that all of our trade partners base their regulations on sound science and international standards, and Taiwan is no exception. U.S. beef is among the safest and most delicious in the world and there is absolutely no reason for these unjustified restrictions. Ranchers and farmers in Montana and across the country count on international markets to support jobs and make ends meet. Taiwan's actions put America's beef producers at an unfair disadvantage, and we simply cannot allow this."**

"American beef is safe and is the best in the world. It should not be discriminated against with unfair trade restrictions. It's imperative that Taiwan drop these restrictions on U.S. beef immediately," said Hatch.

"While I continue to support our economic ties with Taiwan, recent actions taken by the Taiwan government that effectively block U.S. exports of beef are completely unacceptable and unjustified by any scientific measure. The Administration is right to suspend the trade and investment framework talks, and I don't see how those discussions can resume until we restore confidence that our exports will be treated fairly," said Camp.

"I am disappointed Taiwan has imposed yet another barrier to U.S. beef exports, with no legitimate scientific justification. I hope the Government of Taiwan will remove this specific barrier and take further measures to restore confidence and strengthen our bilateral trade relationship," said Levin.

The Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees have jurisdiction over international trade. The full text of the letter sent to President Ma follows here:

February 17, 2010

President Ma Ying-jeou
Taipei City 10048, Taiwan
Republic of China

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to express our serious concern regarding recent actions by the Taiwan government that have effectively blocked imports of U.S. beef. The scientific evidence is clear that U.S. beef is safe and that there is no food-safety justification for these actions. We urge you to take prompt corrective measures to restore trade and avoid further damage to our bilateral trade relations.

Last month, Taiwan began rejecting U.S. beef shipments that contained trace amounts of ractopamine, a widely used feed ingredient that helps produce lean meat. The safe use of ractopamine has been established by international food safety and animal health organizations based upon strict human health safety standards. Ractopamine is approved for use in livestock by the United States and many other countries. Taiwan's own Department of Health recognized the safety of ractopamine in 2007 when Taiwan notified the World Trade Organization that it intended to establish a maximum residue level (MRL) for ractopamine in cattle and swine.

Taiwan's decision not only to reject U.S. beef shipments but also to expand testing to include grocery stores has been unconstructive and unnecessarily restrictive of trade. Taiwan authorities also have staged press conferences and public announcements that only exacerbated the problem and contributed to the inaccurate impression that the positive tests posed any kind of food safety risk. The Taiwan authorities took these actions even though, as Taiwan's former Minister of Health noted, the trace amounts of ractopamine found on U.S. beef shipments were well below the MRL recommended by the Codex scientific committee and Taiwan's own government agencies and posed no threat to human health.

As a result of these actions, U.S. beef exports to Taiwan have ground to a halt – retailers are pulling products off their shelves, importers are cancelling orders, and exporters are redirecting shipments to other markets. We urge you to address the immediate problem relating to beef exports currently in the pipeline and promptly adopt the MRL for ractopamine recommended by the relevant Taiwan agencies.

Moreover, we remain concerned that Taiwan's scientifically unjustified policy on ractopamine continues to impact negatively exports of another major U.S. commodity, pork. Taiwan's health authorities have recognized that trace residues of ractopamine in both pork and beef do not pose risks to human health.

The resolution of the ractopamine matter is critical to avoid serious negative consequences for our trade and broader bilateral relationship and to begin to restore the confidence necessary to permit resumption of the possibility of U.S.-Taiwan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement discussions.

Sincerely,

Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance

Orrin Hatch
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance

Dave Camp
Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means

Sander Levin
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