



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

ISSUE: U.S. PORK AND SHEEP MEAT MARKET ACCESS

IMPORTANCE: Many countries maintain unscientific barriers to U.S. pork and pork products based on unjustified concerns related to animal health issues, such as Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS), or feed additives such as Ractopamine hydrochloride. These unjustified restrictions result either in an outright ban on the import of U.S. pork products or require unnecessary and expensive processing steps, such as cooking the product prior to shipment. There is excellent market potential for U.S. pork and pork product exports if these unjustified restrictions can be lifted. For example, following the implementation of the U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement in 2005, which removed previous PRRS restrictions, U.S. pork and pork variety meat export values to Australia rose steadily to nearly \$302 million in 2019.

Similarly, only 26 countries have established maximum residue levels (MRLs) for the feed additive Ractopamine hydrochloride, resulting in *de facto* bans on imports of many U.S. pork products, despite the Codex Alimentarius committee responsible for establishing feed additive standards adopting an MRL for Ractopamine hydrochloride in 2012. This was an important step toward supporting the efficacy of Codex as an international body, which can set reference standards based on science. However, many countries, including both Russia and China, have since announced zero-tolerance policies for Ractopamine residues in meat products, forcing U.S. companies to utilize USDA programs to certify product prior to export, though China is reviewing Ractopamine following implementation of the U.S.-China Phase One Agreement, which entered into force in February 2019. Effective January 1, 2021, Taiwan is expected to establish MRLs for Ractopamine use in pork production, lifting its longstanding ban that has effectively blocked exports of U.S. pork products. However, Taiwan has proposed an onerous country-of-origin labeling regulation for imported pork, which could undermine additional access U.S. pork receives from the establishment of MRLs for ractopamine.

U.S. sheep meat also faces unjustified restrictions largely because of perceived food safety risks and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE). Currently, China implements a ban on imports of U.S. lamb and sheep meat due to TSEs. The only known TSE that affects sheep and goats in the U.S. is Scrapie, which, due to an extremely low incidence rate and further eradication efforts, is extremely rare. While public health concerns related to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) led to an effort to eradicate all TSEs in ruminants, no case of naturally-transmitted BSE has occurred in sheep or goats. Additionally, considerable evidence shows that Scrapie is not transmissible to humans. Therefore, TSEs in sheep and goats are not a food safety issue in the U.S. or elsewhere, and there is no justification for the ban on imports of U.S. lamb and sheep meat.

OBJECTIVE: To work in cooperation with the USDA, the U.S. Trade Representative's Office, the National Pork Producers Council, the National Pork Board, and the U.S. Meat Export Federation to encourage key trading partners to establish science-based import policies for U.S. pork and sheep meat products. We will build on the success of sheep market access to Japan, which was completed in 2018. These efforts will be focused on removing restrictions based on unjustified PRRS and TSE concerns and beta-agonist-related market barriers. Additionally,

NAMI will work closely with the U.S. Codex Office and USDA's Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs to strengthen the ability of Codex to set international standards based on science.

ACTION STEPS:

- Coordinate on international pork market access issues with the National Pork Producers Council and the National Pork Board, and also for sheep meat with the U.S. Meat Export Federation and U.S. Government agencies, to reopen or retain market access in key pork markets such as China, Taiwan, and South Africa, and to create new export opportunities for sheep meat exports.
- Conduct outreach among the World Trade Organization members represented at their Embassies in Washington, D.C., and encourage the use of science-based standards in establishing trade rules and regulations.
- Monitor and support implementation of forthcoming Ractopamine MRLs in Taiwan for U.S. pork products.