

9/29/2006 Moran Demands Real Market Access for U.S. Beef Products in Korea

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran this week asked the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Lee Tae-Sik, to put an end to continuing restrictions on United States beef products. On September 8, 2006, the Korean government announced its market was open to U.S. beef exports. However, recent Korean interpretations of beef health standards have yielded no meaningful or economically viable access to the Korean market.

"The Korean government's failure to approach resumption of beef trade in a transparent and science-based manner violates international standards and is impossible to comply with," Moran said. "Its interpretations and restrictions enable Korea to claim to allow admission of U.S. beef products, but in practice deny American companies from entering the market and make exportation an economically impossible venture."

The Korean government has recently expanded its interpretation of Specified Risk Materials (SRM) to include silver skin, cartilage, brisket and breast bone. None of these items are classified as SRM by the World Animal Health Organization. Also of issue is the Korean government's continued "zero tolerance" treatment of bone fragments. This interpretation is excessively restrictive and out of step with other importing nations. Further complicating the situation is the Korean government's ability to temporarily suspend all shipments from a meat exporter if as little as one bone chip is found in an entire shipment. Moran urged Korea to adopt a definition of bone that is reasonable and make allowances for bone fragments.

Leading up to the U.S.-Korean Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations set to resume next month, Moran emphasized Korea must reform its rules on beef trade or risk Congressional disapproval of any negotiated agreement.

"Korea's current treatment of U.S. beef products establishes a precedent that it is incapable of abiding by agreements to allow actual market access and casts doubt on its ability to meet any negotiated FTA requirements," Moran said. "Meaningful resumption of beef trade, based on sound scientific and international principles, is essential and must be met."

Moran is a senior member of the House Committee on Agriculture.

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