



Voluntary Report - public distribution

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Thailand

Livestock and Products

Thailand Moves to Enforce Meat Inspection in Exporting Countries 2002

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Report Highlights:

The Thai Government decided not extend the two-year waiver of their regulation, requiring the inspection of meat processing plants in supplier countries.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Bangkok [TH1], TH

Summary

The Thai Department of Livestock Development (DLD) recently decided not to extend the two-year waiver of their regulation, requiring the inspection of meat processing facilities in supplier countries. Since the regulation was announced in 2002, FAS/Bangkok has successfully convinced the Thai DLD to issue a waive. Enforcement of this regulation is now scheduled to begin January 1, 2003 and will obviously impede imports of meat and poultry from the U.S. and other countries. U.S. meat processing facilities which have exported their products to Thailand should take note of this regulation

In October 2000, the DLD announced their new guidelines for the importation of meat and its by-products (including offals). Under these regulations, the DLD required that: 1) any importer must have a DLD-approved cold storage facility, of which the quality is subject to determined standards; and 2) all imported meat and meat by-products coming into Thailand must be delivered from DLD-approved slaughterhouses, which may also be subject to annual inspection by DLD veterinarians. The focus of the meat plant inspections would be the disease control and surveillance system, epidemic status, anti-mortem transportation, slaughtering process and meat inspection, post-mortem transportation to export port, and laboratory tests. Although the DLD claimed that the action was aimed at preventing any exotic disease contact and protecting domestic consumers, the actual motives may be more related to efforts to protect domestic producers as tariffs on meat and meat by-products fall to lower levels in the future.

Shortly after the regulation's announcement, the DLD provided a grace period of one year for all meat imports during 2001, as they needed to work out the details and specific requirements of this plant inspection program. FAS/Bangkok approached high-ranking DLD officials and they finally agreed to waive the regulation for another year in 2002. In the case of U.S. meat and offals, the DLD also agreed to accept U.S. meat plants listed on the Meat and Poultry Inspection Directory issued by the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) as plants eligible for exporting meat and offals into Thailand for the past few years as an interim measure.

According to the Thai Customs Department, Thailand's meat and edible meat offal imports (chapter 2 in the harmonized codes) amounted to US\$ 4.17 million in 2001, US\$ 4.29 million in 2000, and US\$ 6.11 million in 1999, respectively. Thai Customs data indicate that annual U.S. exports to the Thai market were about US\$ 1.0 million(1999-2001), accounting for 20 percent of total imports.

FAS/Bangkok will advise the DLD that this policy is untenable. Furthermore, FAS/Bangkok will again ask DLD to accept USDA list of inspected and approved as proxy.

For background on this measure, please see TH2102.