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Hong Kong

Livestock and Products

Pork exporters asked to provide slaughtering dates and plant names and address

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Report Highlights:

When exporting chilled pork, beef, and mutton to Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is asking the respective health-certificate issuing authority to provide the name and address of the slaughtering plant and slaughtering date on health certificates. FEHD made their written request to all applicable foreign missions in Hong Kong, including the U.S. The Hong Kong official explained that this request is not an import requirement but is simply a trade facilitation measure, since retailers are required by law to provide such information on the labels of prepackaged chilled meats if fresh and chilled meats are sold in the same premises.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Hong Kong [HK1]
[HK]

Summary

The Hong Kong government has introduced the Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2006 on July 7, 2006 and it will become effective six weeks later. The amended regulation prohibits the sale of fresh and chilled beef, mutton or pork in the same fresh provision shop or market stall. Exception is provided only if chilled meats are prepackaged and have been properly marked and labeled before distribution to retail outlets. Information including the name and address of the slaughtering plant and slaughtering date of the food animal concerned are required to be provided in the label of the pre-packaged chilled meat.

In this connection, the Hong Kong government has written to all Consulates in Hong Kong, including Agricultural Trade Office, requesting respective health certificate issuing authority to provide the name and address of the slaughtering plant and the date of slaughter on health certificates accompanying export consignments of chilled meats.

Background

At present, Hong Kong does not allow entry of China's chilled pork. The Hong Kong government has been in discussion for years with the Chinese mainland authority with regard to the importation of chilled pork to Hong Kong. It is understood that officials from the Hong Kong Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have also inspected plants which may become eligible to export chilled pork to Hong Kong.

One of the major hurdles for allowing China's chilled pork to Hong Kong is the objection of local pig farmers and the people involved in the sale of freshly slaughtered pork. They argued that the price of China's chilled pork will be much lower than that of freshly slaughtered pork, unscrupulous retailers may be tempted to deceive consumers by selling chilled pork as freshly slaughtered pork.

Given such background, the Hong Kong government has decided to amend the existing Food Business Regulation so as to make the mixing up of chilled pork and fresh pork difficult. To this end, the Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2006 has been gazetted on July 7, 2006 and will take effect six weeks later. According to the amendment, the sale of fresh and chilled beef, mutton or pork in the same fresh provision shop or market stall will be prohibited unless the chilled beef, mutton or pork is pre-packaged and the package is labeled in the prescribed manner. Information required on the label include slaughtering date and name and address of slaughtering plants.

The sale of poultry and frozen meats is not affected by the regulation amendment this time. Retail shops or stalls which choose to continue to sell chilled meats and not fresh meats are not required to prepackage their chilled meat products. If retailers choose to prepackage their chilled meats for display and sale, they need to observe the normal labeling law, which does not need the labeling of slaughtering date, plant name and address, as required by the Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2006.

Retailers in order to comply with the new regulation, they will ask suppliers to provide the name and address of the slaughtering plant as well as the slaughtering date. In this connection, the Hong Kong Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has written to consulates in Hong Kong, including ATO, asking respective health-certificate issuing authority to provide the name and address of the slaughtering plant and slaughtering date on the health certificates. The Hong Kong official explained that this request is not an import requirement but simply for trade facilitation purposes, since retailers are required to prepackage and label their chilled meat products if fresh and chilled meats are sold in the same premises.

Impact on U.S. Meat Exports

The meat products affected by this regulation amendment include beef, mutton and pork. FSIS health certificates have already slaughtering plants' name and address. FSIS certificates for beef also have slaughtering date. In order words, additional information required by Hong Kong retailers in consequence of the regulation amendment is the slaughtering date for mutton and pork exports.

In 2005, Hong Kong imported \$0.211 million and \$0.072 million of chilled pork and chilled mutton from the U.S. U.S. exporters may be requested by suppliers to provide slaughtering dates of the chilled mutton and pork exports.

It is understood that Hong Kong importers are working out with individual exporters as to how to have the required information provided. Health certificates and invoices are different alternatives that have been explored in the context of providing slaughtering date information.

According to information provided by local retailers, the impact of this new requirement on U.S. products is minimal because U.S. chilled pork and mutton are available, if any, only in very upscale retail outlets, where usually do not sell freshly slaughtered meats supplied locally. Based on industry information, beef and mutton from Australia are affected mostly. Hong Kong importers prefer the information provided on each cartoon box but Australian exporters prefer to include the slaughtering information on invoices or health certificates.

In order to enhance food safety of imported chilled meat, the Hong Kong government has also updated the cold chain requirement of chilled meat/poultry as "The consignment of chilled meat/poultry must be kept at chilling temperature of between 0^o C and 4^o C, and in no circumstances exceeds 8^o C, throughout all stages from the point of chilling at the meat/poultry processing plant up to and including the point at which a person receives the imported chilled meat/poultry for retail sale in the HKSAR. This temperature requirement applies to any portions of the meat/poultry" with effect from July 3, 2006. " Previously, consignments of chilled meat were required to be kept at chilling temperature "between 0^oC and 10^oC, preferably at 4^oC. ".