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# GAIN Report

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## Italy

### Agricultural Situation

#### Fiorentina T-Bone Steak Back on Italian Plates

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Report Highlights: Italian producers pleased that 30 month bone-in beef has been approved for human consumption in EU.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Annual Report  
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The EU Health Commission has just announced that it will raise from 24 to 30 months the maximum age of cattle whose beef can be sold bone-in. This is an eagerly pursued outcome for Italian beef producers, particularly for Fiorentina T-bone steaks and the Chianina cattle raisers. The regulation is expected to be published in the EU Official Gazette later this week.

It has been more than seven years since the European Commission imposed its initial restrictions on beef sales following an outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) - a rare but fatal disease. In humans, the Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease variant is linked to eating meat products contaminated with BSE. Sales of beef containing the backbone of animals aged over 12 months were banned in many European countries, including Italy, in hopes of reducing the risk of catching the Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease variant. This 12 month age limitation directly affected the sale of T-bone and bistecca Fiorentina. The traditional Fiorentina is a sirloin cut of beef that includes a piece of the backbone. Back in 2001 Italian health authorities discovered 50 cases of BSE infected cattle, while during the first nine months of 2007 the number of cases dropped to only two.

In January 2006, Fiorentina steaks became legal in Italy again, but only if the meat came from cattle not older than 24 months. The EU ruling is being hailed by the Italian Farmers Organization Coldiretti "as a tribute to efforts made by the Italian livestock producers to promote quality, traceability and safety."

Italian beef consumption has fallen by 4.2% during the first ten months of 2007 compared to the previous year, while in 2006 Italians spent 3.5 billion Euros on beef, consuming more than 23 kilos of meat per household.

Comment: It is interesting that in the EU, where BSE had been a serious problem (albeit now under control), bone-in beef from animals 30 months of age can now appear on consumers' plates, yet there are other countries, such as Japan, that resist accepting even boneless US beef from animals of the same 30 months, despite the US product coming from a country with a low BSE risk designation according to the OIE.