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Canada

Trade Policy Monitoring

Canada Bans Brazilian Beef Products

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Approved by:

Norval Francis

U.S. Embassy, Ottawa

Prepared by:

George Myles

Report Highlights: Canada has suspended imports of products of bovine origin from Brazil pending a determination by Canada that Brazil is a BSE-free country. Until Brazil complies with Canadian information requirements for completing a risk assessment, Canada is banning the importation of animal products of bovine origin from Brazil and has undertaken a recall of all such Brazilian products, mainly corned beef and beef extract. Canada only imports animals and animal products from countries recognized as free of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Ottawa [CA1], CA

Effective February 2, 2001 Canada will no longer accept products of bovine origin from Brazil pending a determination by Canada that Brazil is a BSE-free country (see CA1015, 02/02/01). Canadian imports of animal products are assessed on a case by case basis and are only permitted entry if judged not to present a risk of introducing BSE following a risk assessment study by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Until Brazil complies with Canadian information requirements for completing the risk assessment, Canada is banning the importation of animal products of bovine origin from Brazil and has undertaken a recall of all such Brazilian products, mainly corned beef and beef extract. The CFIA will remove the provisional measures if Brazil is deemed BSE-free following Canada's risk assessment study.

A copy of the press release issued by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency follows:

Start Press Release.

CANADA TAKES ACTION TO PROTECT CONSUMERS

Ottawa, February 2, 2002 - The Government of Canada is taking prudent and reasonable measures today by suspending imports of food products from Brazil which are subject to Canada's policy for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). These food products include canned corned beef and liquid beef extract from Brazil, as well as other processed products. In addition, these products are being removed from the marketplace. Information has been received in the past several days which casts doubts on the security of Brazil's import practices relating to European products of bovine origin and calls into question the effectiveness of the controls in place in Brazil concerning potential BSE risks. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicated in a January 25, 2001 report that there is significant potential that BSE may have already moved beyond the borders of Europe. And, on January 30, 2001, Brazilian officials indicated that imports of live animals from European countries continued until 1999.

It is important to note that live animals, fresh and frozen beef have never been permitted into Canada from Brazil. Canada is taking this action on an important public health issue to protect consumers and safeguard the country's food supply. "Canada is recognized by the Office Internationale des Epizooties (OIE) to be free of BSE and we must be extremely vigilant in order to maintain this status," said Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Lyle Vanclief. "The Government of Canada is not about to take any chances with the good faith and trust Canadians have in their safe food supply."

"The health of Canadians and the safety of our food supply are the utmost priorities for Canada," added Minister of Health Allan Rock.

Canada only imports animals and animal products from countries recognized as free of BSE. When this policy was put in place in 1998, Canada requested that Brazil and other countries provide information that would permit Canada to assess BSE status. Brazil has not provided requested information on its importation activities and domestic animal health situation that would allow Canada to determine if Brazil is free of BSE. Argentina, Uruguay, United States, Australia and New Zealand have all provided the information

which has allowed for their recognition as free of BSE in accordance with the established process.

Canada will complete its assessment of Brazil expeditiously once the pertinent information is received and reviewed. If Brazil meets Canada's requirements to be assessed as free of BSE, the temporary suspension of imports will be lifted.

Background to Import Restrictions from Brazil

Canada does not import commodities which are known to pose a risk of BSE from countries not recognized as free of BSE, including the U.K., Germany, France, Portugal, Denmark, Spain and Italy. Canada's policy is to not accept imports of certain animal products such as beef from a country unless Canada has recognized that country to be free of BSE. This policy was put in place in 1998 at which time we requested that Brazil and other countries provide us with information that would permit us to assess BSE status.

In a letter dated May 28, 1998, Brazil was formally notified and provided a questionnaire to be used in assessing their BSE status. Brazil is the only country that has not complied with our request for information. Argentina, Uruguay, the United States, Australia and New Zealand have all provided the information which has allowed the CFIA to conduct a proper assessment which has allowed for their recognition as BSE free in accordance with the established process.

Canada submitted formal notification of zoosanitary import policies pertaining to BSE to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1998. Canada's import policies pertaining to BSE were implemented on June 15, 1998. A request was made to the Brazilian authorities to obtain information for the Canadian assessment of Brazil's BSE status in May 1998. A further request for this information was forwarded through the Canadian Embassy in Brasilia in June 1998.

Canada received preliminary information from the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Secretariat in Brazil in July 1998. During a subsequent Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) mission to Brazil conducted for other reasons related to animal health, the request for further information pertaining to BSE was presented to staff of Brazil's Chief Veterinary Officer. A letter requesting a response to the Canadian request for information on BSE was sent to Brazil's Chief Veterinary Officer in November 1999.

In the fall of 2000, international information regarding the worldwide export of animals and animal products from European countries potentially contaminated with BSE was released. Information has been received in the past several days which casts doubts on the security of Brazil's import practices relating to European products of bovine origin and calls into question the effectiveness of the controls in place in Brazil concerning potential BSE risks.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has indicated in a January 25, 2001, report that there is significant potential that BSE may have already moved beyond the borders of Europe. This is based on the evidence that feeds of animal origin in the European Community are clearly implicated as a primary vehicle for the spread of the disease and the lack of capacity of the European Community to effectively preclude the movement out of Europe of the massive and increasing amounts of these risk materials.

On January 30, 2001, Brazilian officials indicated that imports of live animals from European countries continued until 1999. However, officials are not able to conclusively determine the number of animals or their origins, therefore necessitating a massive traceback of these animals in Brazil which is just now being undertaken.

Canada's Actions

In the absence of a satisfactory response from Brazil, Canada decided to suspend current imports of canned corned beef and liquid beef extract, and proceed with the removal of affected product from the marketplace. Canada will complete its assessment of Brazil expeditiously once the pertinent information is received and reviewed. If Brazil meets Canada's requirements to be assessed as free of BSE, the temporary suspension of imports will be lifted.

Canada's BSE Policy

Canada is recognized as being free of BSE by the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) and we must be extremely vigilant in order to maintain this status.

Canada has not imported ruminant-derived meat and bone meal from European countries for several decades. In 1997, the CFIA banned the feeding of rendered products from ruminant animals back to other ruminants, like cattle, sheep, goats, bison, elk or deer. In December 2000, the CFIA suspended the importation of rendered animal material of any species from any country that is not recognized as free of BSE.

Canada has created a surveillance program in which the brains of all cattle that might potentially have BSE are tested for the disease. Many animals have been tested without detection of BSE. Canada has tested hundreds of cattle for BSE each year since its BSE surveillance program was started. The CFIA also made BSE a reportable disease, such that any suspect case of BSE must be reported to a federal veterinarian immediately. Canadian veterinarians and livestock producers have been alerted to the signs of BSE. Adult cattle exhibiting suspicious symptoms are destroyed and subjected to a laboratory examination for BSE.

Canada is not complacent about BSE. We are rigorous in monitoring and assessing diseases like BSE in order to make advancements in scientific developments and put prudent and reasonable measures in place to guard against these diseases.

End Press Release.

For a list of the Brazilian beef products subject to the CFIA recall, go to the following CFIA website:

<http://www.cfia-acia.agr.ca/english/corpaffr/newcom/newsrele.shtml>

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