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Report Highlights:

Bite size local news, Post reports and activity summaries wrapped by ATO Hong Kong. In this issue: USDA announces an Agribusiness Trade Mission to Hong Kong; Consul General Greg May and ATO Hong Kong welcome leaders from the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council; ATO Hong Kong teams up with celebrity chef Andy Dark to showcase festive U.S. dishes; Hong Kong government unveils a blueprint to boost tourism; Hong Kong hotel tax resumes January 1, 2025; and multi-entry visas for Shenzhen travelers show early signs of boosting retail and catering sales.



USDA Agribusiness Trade Mission to Hong Kong Announced!

It's official! The USDA is accepting applications for its agribusiness trade mission to Hong Kong, scheduled for May 12-16, 2025. This mission provides a platform for U.S. exporters to build connections and gain insights essential for success in Asia. In 2023, Hong Kong was the 17th-largest global market for U.S. agricultural products, importing \$1.5 billion worth of goods. The trade mission includes business-to-business meetings, market briefings, site visits, and networking events, coinciding with the ProWine and USDA-endorsed HOFEX trade show. Key sectors include poultry, pork, beef, seafood, tree nuts, fresh fruit, condiments, sauces, soups, prepared foods, bakery goods, cereals, pasta, candies, confectioneries, and alcoholic beverages. We hope to see you there!

For more information or to apply, visit <https://www.fas.usda.gov/topics/trade-missions/hong-kong-may-2025>. The application deadline is **Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025**.

USAPEEC Leadership Visits Hong Kong Ahead of Annual Trade Reception



On January 8, USA Poultry and Egg Export Council (USAPEEC) President and CEO Greg Tyler and other USAPEEC leaders visited Hong Kong and met with U.S. Consul General, Greg May, and the ATO Director at a trade-hosted dinner. Following a market briefing at the ATO office on January 9, ATO staff joined the team at the USAPEEC Annual Trade Reception in Panyu, China. The event brought together over 650 attendees, including U.S. poultry and egg exporters, regional buyers, logistics companies, and FAS and FSIS staff from across China. In the first eleven months of 2024, U.S. poultry meat exports to Hong Kong grew 36 percent to \$125.9 million, aided by recovering local demand and fewer shipments to the mainland due to HPAI restrictions.

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ATO's Festive Celebration Brings “Joy to the Plate”



To increase consumer awareness of the accessibility and versatility of high-quality U.S. ingredients and wines in the local market, ATO Hong Kong worked with celebrity chef Andy Dark to produce “Joy to the Plate,” a recipe video series featuring U.S. premium ingredients with U.S. wine-paring recommendations for the holidays. Featured ingredients include U.S. beef, Idaho potatoes, Washington Apples, California and Oregon wines, and U.S. cranberries, butter, cheese, eggs, and wheat flour. The two recipes have generated 61,135 views and received 2,602 reactions across three social media platforms. Check out the Prime Rib Roast on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) and Cranberry Cheesecake on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

ECONOMY



Mainland Chinese Will Remain Bulk of Tourists to Hong Kong for 5 Years: Minister [[SCMP](#), Jan.5]

Mainland Chinese travelers will remain the major source of visitors to Hong Kong over the next five years, according to Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Rosanna Law Shuk-pui. Despite this, Law is confident that the number of international travelers will continue to rise, citing a 30 percent year-on-year increase during the Christmas holiday. A new tourism development blueprint aims to boost the economy by \$15.5 billion (\$120 billion HKD) and employ 210,000 people over five years. The blueprint highlights Hong Kong’s role as an international tourism hub. **ATO Notes:** According to the statistics from the Immigration Department, mainland travelers remained the largest source of visitors to Hong Kong in 2024, followed by travelers from Southeast Asia. Mainland visitors are increasingly choosing not to spend the night, reducing the time and dollars spent on each visit. The Hong Kong Government (HKG) recent tourism blueprint establishes strategies to boost tourism and revenue. ATO Hong Kong is preparing a GAIN report to highlight the strategies within the blueprint that could impact demand for U.S. food and beverage products.

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Electricity Bills, Bus Fares and Public Housing Rents Rise in January [[The Standard](#), Jan.1]

Starting in January, Hong Kong citizens will face increased costs for transportation and public services. Electricity bills will rise about one percent and bus fares will increase by four to eight percent. Public housing rents will rise by 10 percent. Additionally, a three percent hotel accommodation tax will be resumed. **ATO Notes:** Unlike many other countries, inflation in Hong Kong has remained relatively low following the pandemic. In November 2024, Hong Kong consumer prices increased just 1.4 percent compared to the previous year. However, with the government currently running a significant deficit, locals are bracing for higher costs for services in 2025.

China Says Hong Kong Welcomes Global Investment [[The Standard](#), Jan.2]

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning invited global enterprises to invest in Hong Kong, emphasizing the city's growth potential under the "One Country, Two Systems" policy. She noted that nearly 10,000 mainland and overseas companies had established bases in Hong Kong by the end of last year, with local startups reaching about 4,700. Hong Kong is recognized as the world's freest economy and ranks third in the Global Financial Centres Index, with an asset management industry worth over \$4 trillion. The city saw a tourism boom with 44 million visitors and attracted 170,000 individuals through talent acquisition initiatives. Mao expressed confidence in Hong Kong's continued development with Central Government support. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong remains an attractive market for global investment. Nearly 1,300 U.S. companies operate offices in the HKSAR, including many regional headquarters. While tourism still lags the record 65 million tourists reached in 2018, both the local Hong Kong government and authorities in Beijing are taking action to boost the visitors, which aligns with overall investment and integration goals for Hong Kong and the Greater Bay region.

Hong Kong Expo Footfall 'Back to Pre-Pandemic Levels' but No Sales Boost [[SCMP](#), Jan.6]

The 58th annual Hong Kong Brands and Products Expo saw footfall return to pre-pandemic levels, with about 1.3 million visitors, up 30 percent from two years ago. The increase was attributed to the resumption of the multi-entry visa scheme, direct partnerships with mainland tour agencies, and social media promotions. Despite the high attendance, sales are expected to stagnate at around \$128.2 million (\$1 billion HKD), as shoppers spent more cautiously. **ATO Notes:** The Hong Kong Expo's sales situation aligns with that of retailers and the F&B industry, as both local and mainland consumers remain cautious on increased spending in the face of economic uncertainty.

HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS



Catering Industry's Christmas Revenue Rises 8pc: Simon Wong [[The Standard](#), Dec.26]

Simon Wong Ka-wo, president of the Hong Kong Federation of Restaurants and Related Trades, announced an 8 percent increase in the catering industry's turnover during the Christmas period compared to last year. He attributed this growth to the rise in inbound tourists and the resumption of multi-entry visas from Shenzhen. Wong noted that various activities and fireworks displays likely

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attracted more visitors, boosting consumption. He mentioned that there were price reductions and promotions for hotel buffets rather than significant price increases. Despite diminished spending power, participation in major events remained strong. Wong expressed confidence in an overall increase in the industry's turnover for the year. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong government officials urged the retail and foodservice industries to capitalize on business opportunities presented by mainland tourists during the upcoming Lunar Chinese New Year holiday. Restaurant receipts are estimated to grow by 10 percent year-over-year during the period, boosted by the resumption and expansion of the multiple-entry visa scheme for Shenzhen residents.

Hotels and Tourists See Tax as Unneeded Baggage [[The Standard](#), Jan.3]

The resumption of the 3 percent hotel accommodation tax on January 1 may deter some tourists from visiting Hong Kong. A young mainland traveler expressed concerns about increased accommodation costs. Another tourist noted that Hong Kong remains attractive if hotel rates are competitive with other Asian destinations. The guest house sector, represented by David Leung Tai-wai, called for a delay in the tax's implementation, citing a significant decrease in the number of overnight stays, with a 40 percent drop compared to before the pandemic. Timothy Chui Ting-pong of the Hong Kong Tourism Association believes the tax won't significantly deter tourists, emphasizing the importance of quality services and attractions. He is optimistic about increased bookings for the Lunar New Year. **ATO Notes:** The hotel accommodation tax (HAT) will generate annually an estimated \$141.3 million in revenue for the Hong Kong government, welcome income during a period of high budget deficits.

Black Pearl Restaurant Guide 2025 Awards 7 Hong Kong Spots Diamond Ratings for First Time [[SCMP](#), Jan.3]

The Black Pearl Restaurant Guide 2025, published by Meituan, was unveiled in Nanchang on January 6. The number of selected restaurants in Hong Kong and Macau has increased, with 37 in Hong Kong and 17 in Macau. Seven Hong Kong establishments were named one-diamond restaurants for the first time, including Chinesology, Rùn, Stellar House, The Legacy House, L'Envol, and Estro. The Chairman was upgraded to a three-diamond rating, joining Howard's Gourmet. In Macau, Palace Garden and Chef Tam's Seasons received one-diamond ratings. Meituan reported a 30.1 percent increase in searches for Black Pearl-rated restaurants, indicating growing demand for high-quality dining. **ATO Notes:** The Black Pearl Restaurant Guide has been gaining recognition among Chinese consumers since its inaugural issue in 2018. The announcement will benefit selected establishments in Hong Kong and Macau by raising Chinese tourists' awareness of and interest in exploring top gastronomic experiences in both cities.

RETAIL



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Retail Year Ends on Cheery Note with Shenzhen Easing [[The Standard](#), Jan.3]

The resumption and expansion of the multiple-entry individual travel scheme for Shenzhen residents significantly boosted Hong Kong's retail sector last month, despite a 7.3 percent year-on-year decline in November retail sales. Lower-priced items such as cosmetics, fast food, and clothing benefited the most from this influx. However, challenges remain, particularly the strong Hong Kong dollar, which deters visitors from purchasing high-priced items. **ATO Notes:** While the retailers welcome the influx of visitors from neighboring Shenzhen, mainland travelers stay shorter periods and spend less money on average than visitors from outside China, including the U.S. and EU. As new long haul flight routes re-open between those markets and Hong Kong in 2025, retailers stand to gain.

TRADE



Hong Kong Can Adopt Mainland Building Material Standards to Cut Costs, Experts Say [[SCMP](#), Jan.3]

Hong Kong could adopt mainland Chinese standards for construction materials, rather than use European benchmarks, to help reduce building costs, which are the highest in Asia, according to Godfrey Leung King-kwok, executive director of the Hong Kong Construction Association. He noted that adopting mainland standards could lower expenses, with random sampling ensuring quality. The limited use of Building Information Modelling (BIM) also contributes to high costs. John Batten of Arcadis suggested that mainland materials are comparable in quality and could reduce costs. **ATO Notes:** The U.S. hardwood industry has made great inroads in reaching local architects to share information about how sustainable American hardwoods can meet a multitude of design requirements. A change in Hong Kong's building material standards could affect demand for U.S. hardwoods as builders look to cheaper alternatives. In the first 11 months of 2024, U.S. forestry products exports to Hong Kong increased 7 percent to \$5.6 million.

Hong Kong Suspends Imports of Poultry Meat and Products from 18 U.S. Counties [[CFS – Press Release](#), Jan. 10; [CFS – Press Release](#), Jan. 3]

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has suspended poultry imports from 18 counties following a notification from the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). **ATO Notes:** In the last 11 months of 2024, U.S. poultry meat exports to Hong Kong grew 36 percent to \$126 million. In contrast, U.S. egg exports contracted 80 percent to \$1.6 million.

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ATO EVENTS CALENDAR



UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb 2025

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 2/6-9 | Pet Show Hong Kong |
| 2/6-19 | Kai Bo Retail In-store Promotion (ATO HK, USMEF, Sunkist Growers, Washington Apple Commission) |
| 2/19-22 | Hong Kong International Fur & Fashion Fair (Wisconsin Department of Agriculture) |
| 2/21-23 | Vegetarian Food Asia |

Mar 2025

- | | |
|---------|--------------|
| 3/12-14 | APLF Leather |
|---------|--------------|

Apr 2025

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 4/2-3 | Educational Workshops at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (ATO HK, U.S. Wheat Associates, U.S. Dairy Export Council, Raisin Administrative Committee) |
|-------|---|

May 2025

- | | |
|---------|---------------------------------|
| 5/12-16 | USDA Agribusiness Trade Mission |
| 5/14-16 | HOFEX/ProWine |

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Attachments:

No Attachments.