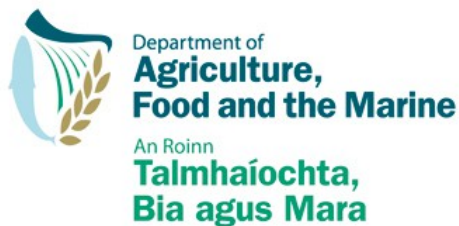


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PRESS RELEASE

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COVENEY WELCOMES POSITIVE DECISION BY US ON BEEF IMPORTS

AFTER YEARS OF LOBBYING MINISTER COVENEY STRONGLY WELCOMES THE NEW APPROACH FROM US AUTHORITIES WHICH OPENS THE DOOR FOR IRISH AND EUROPEAN BEEF IMPORTS

The Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine Simon Coveney TD today welcomed the announcement by the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) that it is changing the regulations which restricted the importation of beef from the European Union due to BSE.

Minister Coveney welcomed the decision and said that *“this issue was one of my priorities when I visited the US last year and I pushed the matter strongly with US Department of Agriculture Secretary of State Tom Vilsack and in meetings with Senators. The decision provides an opportunity for Ireland to penetrate a sector of the US beef market which can reward top quality, sustainably produced beef”*.

The Minister said that the publication of the new regulation is a critical first step and that his Department is working to complete specific veterinary requirements demanded by the US so that Irish beef is well placed to take advantage of this latest development. He added *“My officials will continue to engage with the USDA and Irish producers to finalise the various technical requirements to ensure commencement of the trade at the earliest possible date”*.

Concluding the Minister said that the opening of this sought-after market provides further evidence of the ongoing work to grow and develop the beef industry in accordance with the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. Noting the potential for the Irish beef sector, the Minister said that the US consumer, and particularly those of Irish heritage, would be a very interesting market for our grass fed beef. *“I am confident that this market will grow strongly as US consumers realise the superior quality of Irish grass fed beef and the Irish meat industry and Bord Bia are well placed to develop*

this niche market to US consumers in the near future. I will be in the US next week and my officials will be following up with the USDA while there”.

Notes for Editors:

- √¹ The US banned the importation of Irish and EU beef in 1997 following the BSE outbreak. In the intervening period, as a result of measures taken including the exclusion of specific risk material and the feed ban, Ireland is now classified as “controlled risk” under the internationally accepted standards of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).
- √¹ However, the US policy has not recognised the international standard, thereby blocking market access.
- √¹ Prior to the ban on imports to the US, Irish exports were approximately 110t per annum mostly in frozen boneless cuts. Market analysis by Bord Bia would see Irish beef target a niche market, with our grass fed sustainable product able to attract a premium.
- √¹ In April 2012, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) published a proposed rule to amend the regulations that govern the importation of animals and animal products. After a public comment period, the USDA published the final rule today in the Federal Register. The rule brings US BSE import regulations in line with international animal health standards that call for countries to base their trade policies on the actual risk of animals or products harbouring the disease. Under the rule, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the USDA can accept the OIE’s risk determination.
- √¹ The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine will continue discussions with the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) to seek approval as soon as possible of Irish meat plants interested in supplying the US market with beef. A Department representative will travel to Washington next week for bilateral discussions with the FSIS. The meeting will see submission by the Department of a completed SRT (Self Reporting Tool) which is a detailed USDA questionnaire on our food safety controls.

ENDS