



Trade MEPs back proposed EU concession to end hormone beef trade war

Committees: Committee on International Trade

A proposed EU concession to help put an end to the 20-year hormone beef trade war with the USA and Canada was unanimously endorsed by the International Trade Committee on Thursday. The proposal, which would raise the EU import quota for beef from animals not treated with hormones, will be put to a vote by Parliament as a whole on 13 March.

"This will be a win-win resolution, as the EU keeps its ban on hormone treated beef imports without disadvantaging European agricultural products while the USA and Canada gain a very useful quota for their non-hormone treated beef" exports, said rapporteur Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl (EPP, DE), on the outcome of the vote.

If approved by the full Parliament, the regulation will allow third countries to sell the EU 48,200 tonnes of duty-free high-quality beef from animals not treated with growth-promoting hormones. The EU import quota increase was agreed in bilateral conciliation talks and memoranda of understanding already concluded with the US and Canada.

In exchange, the US and Canada have already suspended import duties, amounting to almost \$130 million, imposed on "blacklisted" EU farm produce. Suspending these duties, which hit France, Germany, Denmark and Italy hardest, will enable these and other Member States to sell their chocolate, pork, Roquefort cheese, mustard, onions and truffles and other products to the USA and Canada at competitive prices.

History of the "beef hormone dispute"

The "beef hormone dispute" has affected transatlantic trade since 1988, when the EU banned imports of beef from animals treated with growth-promoting hormones. In 1996, the US and Canada, which were worst affected by the ban, challenged it before a WTO dispute settlement panel and were subsequently authorized to impose trade sanctions on EU farm produce exports.

Since 1999, the US and Canada have imposed retaliatory tariffs on a wide range of EU exports, worth US\$ 116.8 million and C\$11.3 million respectively, which severely reduced the EU's share of their markets.

What next?

The regulation is scheduled for approval by the full Parliament on 13 March. The new import tariff quota would take effect as of August 2012.

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