



For Immediate Release
March 29, 2007

Contact: Carol Guthrie
(202) 224-4515

BAUCUS HAILS RETURN OF U.S. BEEF TO JAPANESE STORES
Finance Committee Chairman calls on Japan to eliminate remaining restrictions

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today applauded the news that U.S. beef is back on store shelves in Japan. Three years after Japan instituted an unscientific ban on U.S. beef in 2003, that nation announced its intention in July of last year to accept some American beef imports – from cattle 21 months of age and younger. Today was the first day U.S. beef became available in Japanese stores again.

“Japanese consumers have spoken, and they wanted safe, delicious American beef back on their dinner tables. Putting some U.S. beef back on Japanese store shelves is a step in the right direction, but Japan still needs to go the last mile,” said Baucus. **“International scientific standards say that all U.S. beef is safe, regardless of age, so we won’t be satisfied until Japan accepts our perfectly safe beef from cattle of all ages.”**

In 2003, Japan banned U.S. beef after a cow in Washington state tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE. In December of 2005, Japan lifted its ban on U.S. beef from cattle less than 20 months of age, but suspended imports again almost immediately after a Japan-bound veal shipment was found to contain a backbone that posed no risk to human health. International scientific standards set by the World Organization for Animal Health (the “OIE”) support the safety of all U.S. beef, regardless of the age of the cattle.

Baucus has been at the forefront of efforts to urge Japan to lift its beef ban. He met with Japan’s Ambassador Kato on two separate occasions in 2006 and sent a letter to Prime Minister Koizumi in May, strongly urging an end to the beef ban. Baucus submitted comments in Japanese to Japan’s Food Safety Commission regarding steps by American producers to ensure the safety and quality of U.S. beef. Senator Baucus also traveled to Japan to meet with Japan’s trade and agriculture ministers to argue for lifting the ban. He brought senior officials from Japan and other Asian countries to eat Montana beef on a Montana ranch to encourage them to lift the ban.

###