



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

<http://finance.senate.gov>

For Immediate Release
Thursday, October 20, 2005

Contact: Brian Pomper/Wendy Carey
202-224-4515

Baucus Praises Thailand for Reopening Market to U.S. Beef *Senator Uses Announcement to Press Japan To Open Market*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, today welcomed news that Thailand has lifted its ban on U.S. beef, effective immediately. Thailand imposed a ban on U.S. beef after the discovery of a Canadian-born, BSE-infected dairy cow in Washington state in December 2003.

Baucus said he's using the announcement to ramp up the push to get Japan, previously the largest purchaser of U.S. beef, and Korea to open their borders as well.

"I commend the government of Thailand for being a leader in Asia by following sound science in lifting the beef ban," Baucus said. "U.S. beef is the safest and highest quality in the world. I'm glad that Thailand has shown the way," Baucus continued. "Now it is up to Japan, Korea, and others to follow Thailand's lead."

Japan and Korea continue to ban U.S. beef imports following cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE, in Canada and the United States.

Senator Baucus has led the effort in Congress to urge Thailand to lift its beef ban. Baucus traveled to Thailand in March 2004 to press the issue with Prime Minister Thaksin. Baucus also brought Ambassadors and other senior officials from Asian governments to his home state of Montana in August 2004, where they were able to see the process used to ensure that U.S. beef remains the highest quality in the world.

This past July, Baucus continued to pressure Thailand to lift its beef ban at the "Big Sky" Round of U.S.-Thailand negotiations, which was held in Great Falls, Montana at the invitation of Senator Baucus.

Chirachai Punkrasin, current head of the Thai Embassy in Washington D.C., is one of the many senior Thai officials who have visited Montana at the invitation of Senator Baucus.

"I ate Montana beef with Senator Baucus at a ranch outside of Helena last summer," Punkrasin said. "I'm happy Thailand has agreed to resume accepting imports of U.S. beef. Senator Baucus has consistently argued for the safety and quality of U.S. beef at all levels of my government, from the Prime Minister on down. His efforts were key to lifting Thailand's ban on U.S. beef imports."

Baucus also applauded the strong work of the U.S. Trade Representative, Ambassador Rob Portman, and his negotiating team.

“Ambassador Portman and his team deserve special credit for the hard work they have done to encourage Thailand to remove its beef ban. This is a terrific example of Congress and USTR working in tandem to accomplish an important goal for U.S. ranchers.”

#