Despite the much deserved fanfare, U.S. beef exporters need to be patient and deliberative in marketing their products in China. Post suggests educating Chinese importers on the technical procedures for importing U.S. beef, and combining this education with traditional market promotion activities highlighting U.S. beef’s unique niche and story. On September 25, 2017, this approach was used by the Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) in Beijing and the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). More than 25 U.S. beef exporters from states including California, South Dakota, Colorado, and Nebraska promoted U.S. beef to at least 400 Chinese buyers and other participants.
**Background**
In May 2017, China reopened its market to U.S. beef exports allowing access for chilled, frozen, bone-in, and boneless beef products, as well as, a broad scope of offal products. Many U.S. exporters and their Chinese importing partners have begun commercial shipments, however many are also still not yet familiar with the technical requirements to import U.S. beef. For more information about the technical procedures to import U.S. beef into China, refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service’s report on the Procedures for Exporting U.S. Beef to China.

On September 25, 2017, the ATO Beijing assisted USMEF and other beef exporters for a full day of U.S. beef education and promotion events. ATO Beijing organized and co-hosted the U.S. Beef Import Workshop to discuss the technical requirements for importing U.S. beef into China. Following the workshop, USMEF held the first U.S. beef “Roadshow” in Beijing, which was equal parts education, product promotion, and buyer-seller matchmaking. After U.S. beef’s 14-year absence in the Chinese market, these events presented a compelling case on how to combine education and product promotion to expand U.S. beef exports in China.

**U.S. Beef Import Workshop**
The U.S. Beef Import Workshop was organized and co-hosted by ATO Beijing and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT). The primary purpose of this workshop was to provide an informal “roundtable” venue to educate interested Chinese beef buyers on the technical requirements and procedures to import U.S. beef. The secondary purposes were to discuss concerns directly with Chinese government working-level officials, and to allow U.S. exporters an additional opportunity to interact with Chinese buyers before the USMEF Roadshow. Approximately 65 participants attended, of which included at least 45 industry representatives. ATO Beijing and CCPIT noted that interest exceeded expectations; many industry participants were unable to participate due to the limited size of the venue.

The workshop included Chinese government presentations, U.S. and Chinese industry discussion, and an open question and answer session. China’s Food and Drug Administration (CFDA) presented on how they test beef (and other imported food products) to ensure they meet government standards. A representative from China’s General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) outlined the basic requirements that need to be met for U.S. beef to be eligible for export to China (these requirements, as well as, additional technical information, can be found on the Food Safety and Inspection Service’s Export Library for China). A representative from Certification and Accreditation Administration of the People’s Republic of China (CNCA) spoke about tariff rates for major beef products, and how shipments are cleared at China’s major ports of entry.

A representative from one of China’s largest agricultural products importers, China National Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation (COFCO), spoke about the company’s experience importing U.S. beef. COFCO expects demand for beef to continue to grow, and believes U.S. beef will be a successful
addition to the market. However, the representative also mentioned “some noise” consisting of optimistic Chinese media reports about U.S. beef re-entering the market with the reality of low U.S. supplies and high prices. A representative from a major Chinese supermarket chain reiterated the importance of educating Chinese consumers about U.S. beef, and noted that Chinese consumers are becoming more selective due to the increasing retail and e-commerce choices at their fingertips. USMEF presented on the strengths of U.S. beef noting that the United States is perfectly situated to export high quality single cuts of beef, which can be tailored to Chinese distributors’ preferences (e.g., restaurants or supermarket chains that need large stable volumes of specific beef cuts). USMEF further explained that the United States is capable of exporting chilled beef. They further expect supplies to increase and prices decrease as more facilities become registered and accredited to ship U.S. beef to China.

Post believes the question and answer session benefitted representatives from several smaller Chinese distributors who asked technical questions of the Chinese government ministries (i.e., AQSIQ, CNCA, and CFDA) represented. For example, questions were asked about registration timelines, how different types of facilities should be registered with AQSIQ, and labeling requirements at specific ports of entry. There was also a significant amount of discussion about sharing U.S. beef’s “story” to Chinese consumers. Due to rising incomes and tourism, Chinese consumers are increasingly interested in knowing from where their (imported) food is grown or produced. Post believes U.S. industry should promote beef’s long history in the United States to Chinese consumers.

**USMEF Roadshow**

Following the U.S. Beef Import Workshop, USMEF held the **2017 China-U.S. Beef Roadshow and Product Showcase** which brought together U.S. exporters and Chinese buyers for a “trade show” style event in a large ballroom which allowed U.S. exporters to meet with Chinese buyers in individual booths. The festive event began with presentations by USMEF on what U.S. beef can offer to Chinese buyers. It also featured cooking and product demonstrations. Approximately 400 participants attended the roadshow and more than 25 U.S. beef producers had booths showcasing their products. Following the event in Beijing, USMEF held similar roadshow events on September 27, in Shanghai, and on September 29, in Guangzhou, China.
Conclusions
After a 14 year hiatus, U.S. beef is again for sale in China. Despite the much deserved fanfare, U.S. beef exporters to China need to be patient and deliberative in marketing their products. Post suggests industry focus on combining education with promotion events. As an example, the full day of events in Beijing featured one-half day of education and informal discussion, and one-half day of product promotion and buyer-seller matchmaking. Promotion efforts should also consider focusing on U.S. industry’s ability to provide high quality stable supplies of specific cuts (rather than competing on the lowest overall price), and on telling beef’s unique story in the United States. Chinese buyers still have considerable uncertainty about how to import U.S. beef, thus it is critical to provide opportunities to familiarize them with the procedures to export U.S. beef into China.

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