

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Netherlands

**Post:** The Hague

### Release of containers in the Benelux Countries

**Report Categories:**

Export Accomplishments - Other

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**Report Highlights:**

The sea and airports in the Benelux countries are important entry points into Europe for U.S. agricultural and food products. Due to the volume of trade, and often complex import requirements, USDA/FAS staff in the Netherlands are frequently called upon to assist in gaining the release of detained shipments from the United States. This report describes recent instances in where U.S. goods were released as the result of intervention by USDA/FAS staff. USDA/FAS advocacy prevented direct losses to U.S. firms of over \$2 million.

## **General Information:**

The seaports of Rotterdam and Antwerp, and the airport Schiphol Amsterdam are important entry points for U.S. agricultural products shipped to the EU. A number of these shipments are held by the Dutch (VWA) and Belgian (FAVV) veterinary authorities because of irregularities with the shipments or related documents. Below are six incidents described in which the Foreign Agricultural Service Office (FAS) in The Hague assisted in the prevention of detainment or in releasing detained containers with U.S. agricultural products during March, April and the first half of May this year.

### Release of five containers with beef

On March 15, 2011, FSIS Washington contacted FAS/The Hague, requesting advice about a detained shipment of frozen beef from California in the Port of Antwerp. Post contacted the FAVV (Belgian Food Safety Agency) in Antwerp since there seemed to be confusion about the exact reason for stopping the shipment. Since incorrect Health Certificates were used, the FAVV requested two new correct certificates (Regulation EC/2006/2010, Annex III) in order to release the shipments. During follow up conversations it turned out that an additional four containers were also stopped for the same reason. FSIS has been informed about the situation and is working closely with the industry on this issue. To date most of these containers have been released. The the shipments (five containers) represented an estimated value of \$50,000.

### Dention of whey powder prevented ty FAS advocacy

On March 22, 2011, FAS The Hague was informed by a Dutch importer that an erronous container number had been typed onto a Health Certificate for dairy products. The Health Certificate was issued by AMS for a container with whey powder produced by a dairy company in Wisconsin. FAS The Hague drafted an addendum for AMS to issue in which the right container number was mentioned. On April 4, the importer informed FAS The Hague that Dutch customs passed the containers. The shipment of the U.S. product represents a value of \$86,000.

### Release of two containers of beef

On April 8, 2011, FAS The Hague was informed by FSIS that the Dutch VWA was holding two containers of beef from a producer in Florida. The shipment was detained because the Health Certificate number stamped on the boxes didn't correspond with the number on the Health Certificate. FAS The Hague drafted a declaration with FSIS explaining how this error was made and which preventive procedure will be implemented in the exporter's warehouse management. On April 20, FAS The Hague forwarded the original declaration to the customs agent. On April 21, the customs agent informed FAS The Hague that VWA passed the containers. The shipments of the U.S. products represent a value of \$305,000.

### Release of a shipment with animal protein

On April 11, 2011, FAS The Hague was informed by APHIS in Brussels that a shipment with bovine serum protein shipped by a company in Massachusetts was held by VWA Schiphol. The reason for the detainment was that the original Health Certificate was lost. The VWA judged that a copy of the original was not sufficient. FAS The Hague contacted the customs agent for further clarification, and the VWA regional office to ask for the legislation which supported their decision. On April 14, the customs agent informed FAS The Hague that VWA Schiphol released the shipment after consultation with the VWA regional office. The shipment of the U.S. product represents a value of \$12,600.

### Release of one container with beef

On April 29, 2011, FAS The Hague was informed by FSIS Washington that the Dutch VWA held a container with beef from a producer in Kansas. The reason for the detainment was similar to the reason for the detainment of the beef from Florida (see above). FAS The Hague forwarded the declaration of FSIS explaining how this error was made and which preventive procedures will be implemented in the exporter's warehouse management for the future. On May 17, the customs agent informed FAS The Hague that VWA passed the container. The shipments of the U.S. products represent a value of \$200,000.

Release of seventeen containers of butter

On April 29, 2011, FAS/The Hague was contacted by a Minnesota based dairy producer. The Dutch authorities stopped the shipment because they were unclear about the abbreviations that were used in box I.18 of the Health Certificate. In order to clear the shipment, FAS/The Hague was asked to request a correction letter from AMS that clarifying the description of the goods covered by the certificates. Three separate letters were produced by AMS and the containers were released. The value of the total shipment (seventeen containers) of U.S. butter was \$1,500,000.

*It should be noted that the VWA is increasingly reluctant to release shipments of which the Health Certificate is issued after the date of departure from the United States. On February 10 and May 17, 2011, the VWA refused a consignment because of this error. The two left options were: send it back to the consignor or send to another third country.*