

Angus Stakes

► by **Shauna Rose Hermel**, editor

There's benefit to being ready

On June 30, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue joined U.S. and Chinese dignitaries in ceremonially taking a slice of Nebraska prime rib during a ceremony in Beijing to formally mark the return of U.S. beef to the Chinese market after a 13-year hiatus. Someone was ready to fill that market or we would not have that piece of news to report.

Not much notice

After all, it was just May 11 when the Trump administration announced that the return of U.S. beef products was part of the U.S.-China 100-day Action Plan. There was no indication of what would or would not be accepted. It wasn't until early June that USDA released final details of the protocol that would allow American companies to begin shipping beef exports to China.

Those requirements include:

- Beef and beef products must be derived from cattle that were born, raised and slaughtered in the United States, cattle that were imported from Canada or Mexico and subsequently raised and slaughtered in the United States, or cattle that were imported from Canada or Mexico for direct slaughter;
- Cattle must be traceable to the United



► Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue (center) joins National Cattlemen's Beef Association President Craig Uden (left) and Luan Richeng of Chinese importer COFCO in marking the return of U.S. beef to China.

States birth farm using a unique identifier or, if imported, to the first place of residence or port of entry;

- Beef and beef products must be derived from cattle less than 30 months of age;
- Chilled or frozen bone-in and deboned beef products are eligible for shipment; and
- Carcasses, beef and beef products must

be uniquely identified and controlled up until the time of shipment.

Few ready

Only U.S. companies that have an approved USDA Quality Systems Assessment (QSA) or Process Verified Program (PVP) meeting specified product requirements for China will make the list of suppliers eligible to export to China. As of July 5, fewer than a dozen companies made that list. States represented included Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Washington.

To capitalize on the opening of the Chinese market, those eligible suppliers had to already have a pipeline of qualified cattle in place, for they had just enough notice to package the product and put it on the truck bound for export.

When Japan lifted its age requirements on U.S. beef, many beef producers thought the value of age- and source-verification programs had diminished. Yet, a connection to consumers tells us they want to know more about the food they eat. Kudos to those who took the initiative to listen to the consumer and have the product ready to go when the market opened.

Those who were waiting for the opportunity to present itself before investing in its supply will be at least 14 months out of the market.

And China is a notable market. Its imports of beef have increased in value from \$275 million in 2012 to \$2.5 billion in 2016. That equates to nearly half of the \$5.4 billion worth of beef the United States exported in 2016, making it the world's fourth-largest exporter.

There is an advantage to being ready.

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Angus Journal

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▶ **Mississippi Angus Ass'n Meeting & Banquet, May 5, Raymond**



▶ **Correction to come for the September Next Generation**