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For Immediate Release

Tuesday, April 24, 2007

Grassley Urges President to Press Japan to Remove Barriers on U.S. Beef Imports

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, ranking member of the Committee on Finance, with jurisdiction over international trade, today urged President Bush to impress upon the Japanese prime minister the importance of lifting Japan’s scientifically unjustified barriers to U.S. beef imports. The President is meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Washington this Thursday and Friday.

Grassley, an Iowa Republican, has long urged U.S. trading partners such as Japan and South Korea to abandon scientifically unjustified barriers to U.S. beef imports and recognize the obvious safety of beef from Iowa and other beef-producing U.S. states. The text of Grassley’s letter to the President today follows here.

April 24, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

I am writing with regard to your meetings this week with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan. During your discussions with Prime Minister Abe, I urge that you impress upon him the need for Japan to remove its restrictions on the importation of U.S. beef.

Japan currently limits imports of U.S. beef to beef from animals aged 20 months or younger. This Japanese policy is scientifically unwarranted. The Scientific Commission of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) recommended last month that the United States be classified as having a “controlled risk” for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) by the OIE’s General Assembly. In

other words, the Scientific Commission has determined that – due to U.S. regulatory controls – U.S. beef derived from cattle of all ages can be safely traded, and it is recommending that the OIE General Assembly recognize this finding in OIE standards. While the OIE General Assembly will not make its final classification decision until next month, OIE scientists through the Scientific Commission have already affirmed the safety of U.S. beef from cattle of all ages. Japan should bring its policies into line with the findings of the Scientific Commission and end its age restrictions on the importation of U.S. beef.

Apart from the findings of the OIE’s Scientific Commission, it is patently clear that U.S. beef is safe. After all, millions of Americans eat U.S. beef – derived from cattle of all ages – every day. If this product were unsafe, we would not be consuming it ourselves.

Japan also requires that all boxes containing U.S. beef be inspected prior to clearance by Japanese customs officials. This process is costly, time-consuming, and scientifically unjustified. Japan’s 100 percent inspection requirement is yet another unnecessary impediment imposed on U.S. beef imports. While I am pleased that the United States and Japan agreed yesterday on a process for Japan to end this requirement, the fact remains that Japan to date still inspects all shipments. I encourage Japan to act quickly to implement the agreement that it reached to discontinue its 100 percent inspections.

Due to Japan’s restrictions, exports of U.S. beef to Japan are well below historical levels. Japan should lift its age restrictions on the importation of U.S. beef and should drop its 100 percent inspection requirement. The removal of these scientifically unjustified barriers to U.S. beef imports would benefit U.S. cattle and beef producers, including those in Iowa, as well as Japanese consumers.

Thank you for your attention to this important bilateral trade concern.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley

cc: The Honorable Mike Johanns, Secretary of Agriculture  
The Honorable Susan Schwab, U.S. Trade Representative