

# Seoul May Blacklist Rogue US Beef Exporters

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Trade Minister Kim Jong-hoon Monday suggested making a blacklist of U.S. meatpackers that ship beef from cattle over 30 months old to Korea in violation of the latest Seoul-Washington agreement.

The chief trade official qualified his suggestion by saying that a close-up review was necessary before implementation during a meeting with governing Grand National Party (GNP) lawmakers.

The minister headed the Korean delegation in the latest rounds of talks with U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab in Washington last week to push Korea's demand that only beef shipments from young cattle be allowed into Korea.

“We could consider putting U.S. firms violating the newly agreed age verification program on a blacklist,” Kim said.

Under the quality system assessment (QSA) program, the U.S. government will only allow beef from cattle under the 30 months old to be exported to South Korea — any products without QSA certification would be immediately shipped back.

Kim, however, was negative about the possibility of implementing tighter U.S. beef import regulations because of international trade rules.

“I don't think it is wise to oblige American beef exporters to acquire South Korea's permission for tighter control of them,” Kim said. “It would be a serious infringement of international trade rules.”

Some critics suspect the effectiveness of the voluntary age restrictions by beef exporters backed by the U.S. government, urging the government to introduce some strengthened measures including a new permission system.

After a week-long marathon meeting last week, the two countries agreed to additional measures including a ban on U.S. shipments of beef from older cattle as well as the QSA program with age verification.

Seoul and Washington also came to terms prohibiting the shipment of spinal cords, eyes, skulls and brains — part of specific risk materials with higher risks of mad cow disease — from cows of all ages.

Debates and rows, however, are still running over the resumption of beef imports.

Seoul has decided to postpone posting legal notices in its gazette on the deal, which will pave the way for the resumption of imports.

Although the outcome of the deal seems to have partially mitigated public rage and concern as shown in recent polls, some are still skeptical of the new rules as they are dependent on a voluntary action from traders and not in an officially stipulated form.

Opposition parties, led by the United Democratic Party, have been boycotting the newly launched National Assembly, demanding the governing party's cooperation in revising regulations for stricter beef import standards.

The governing party, in response, called for immediate implementation of the new beef pact.

“We should not delay the import resumption any more. The government needs to publish the revised agreement this week,” GNP floor leader Hong Joon-pyo said Monday.