

Total US Beef Export to Korea to Decrease Despite Increased Output

Korea Times
November 11, 2007

WASHINGTON _ Overall U.S. meat exports were estimated to fall this year and next despite higher production, partly because of suspension of exports to South Korea, the latest report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) said.

"The forecast for total 2007 U.S. meat production is raised reflecting stronger fourth quarter production estimates for red meat and poultry," said the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report, dated Friday.

But the same report said American meat export forecasts for 2007 and 2008 are reduced. "U.S. beef export forecasts are reduced reflecting the suspension of exports to South Korea pending successful negotiation of new import protocols," it said.

The report predicted U.S. meat production for this year will total 48.2 billion pounds, including 12.5 billion pounds in the fourth quarter. The estimate for the first three quarters in 2008 is 36.2 billion pounds.

In January 2006, Seoul partially lifted its U.S. beef import ban after two years of restrictions imposed after the detection of mad cow disease at a U.S. cattle farm. South Korea agreed to buy only boneless products to minimize health risks, but after repeated discoveries of bone fragments in shipments from the U.S., Seoul announced a temporary import suspension.

Senior U.S. lawmakers have vowed to oppose a bilateral free trade agreement until its Asian trading partner removes all restrictions.

The USDA report said South Korea was expected to import 270,000 tons of rice between 2006 and 2007, and export 160,000 tons. Domestic rice production for the two years was estimated at 4.7 million tons.

The report estimated that South Korea will import 8.8 million tons of coarse grain and 8.7 million tons of corn during the same period.