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THE U.S. MEAT IMPORT LAW

In order to clarify some of the questions that have been raised about the importation of meat into the United States, the Foreign Agricultural Service has released an interpretation of the provisions of the Meat Import Law. This legislation (Public Law 88-482) was enacted in August 1964 and became effective at the beginning of 1965. Its objective is to provide a basis for limiting imports of beef and certain other meats into the United States if these imports threaten to exceed a specified quantity.

The Secretary of Agriculture is required, under the Meat Import Law, to estimate at the beginning of each calendar year what the total volume of U.S. imports of certain meats will be during that year. This estimate is reviewed (and revised, if necessary) and published quarterly during the year. The law sets forth a formula for establishing what the level of import quotas should be, if they are necessary, and provides a method of determining when quotas should be imposed. Quotas are to be imposed when the import level estimated by the Secretary of Agriculture for any calendar year equals or exceeds 110 percent of what the quotas would be.

The law states that the President may suspend or increase the quota levels if he determines (1) that such action is required by underlying economic or national interests of the United States, or (2) that the supply of these meats will be inadequate to meet domestic demand at reasonable prices, or (3) that trade agreements with supplying countries will insure the adherence to quota limits. Covered

by this law are fresh, chilled, or frozen meat of cattle, goats, and sheep (except lambs). During 1963-65, 87 percent of the U.S. imports of these meats were fresh, chilled, or frozen; the remainder was mainly canned meat, together with small amounts of sausage. In 1965, 92 percent of the chilled and frozen meat imported was beef, and the remaining 8 percent was mutton, veal, and goat meat (in descending order of importance).

The act states that it is the policy of Congress that the aggregate quantity of these meats imported into the United States during any calendar year, beginning with 1965, should not exceed 725.4 million pounds — except as this amount is increased or decreased in accordance with the change in domestic commercial production of these meats. This base quantity (725.4 million pounds) represents the average annual volume of imports of these meats during the five calendar years 1959 through 1963. The average U.S. commercial production of beef, veal, mutton, and goat meat during these years was 15.7 billion pounds annually; therefore, this base quantity was 4.6 percent of commercial production.

The act provides that if domestic commercial production should increase or decrease, the quotas established should also increase or decrease in proportion. It also specifies the method of calculating the increase or decrease in commercial production for the year in question, i.e., the average of the estimated commercial production for that year and the two preceding years as compared with average

commercial production for the years 1959 through 1963.

The following procedure shows how the quota is calculated: U.S. commercial production of beef, veal, mutton and goat for 1964-66 averaged 19.3 billion pounds, or 22.7 percent greater than the 1959-63 average. In order to calculate the quota quantity for 1966, the base quantity of 725.4 million pounds is multiplied by 1.227; the resultant quota quantity is 890.1 million pounds. To calculate the volume necessary to bring quotas into effect for 1966, the quota quantity of 890.1 million pounds is multiplied by 110 to arrive at a trigger amount of 979.1 million pounds. Imports of meat subject to the act are estimated at 800 million pounds in 1966. Although U.S. imports of beef and other meats subject to quotas under the U.S. Meat Import Law in 1966 were about 30 percent higher than in 1965, they were not large enough to trigger the quotas. Meat import quotas will be imposed in 1967 if imports reach 995.0 million pounds, or 110 percent of the base period (1959-63).

The FAS says that, in future years, the quota and trigger quantities will continue to increase or decrease in proportion to the change in average domestic commercial production of these meats. Furthermore, imports can be expected to increase or decrease as the U.S. market becomes relatively more or less attractive than other foreign markets. Any increase, of course, depends upon whether sufficient supplies are available in the meat-exporting countries for shipment abroad.

Referendum on Mohair Production

A mail referendum among mohair producers will be held February 6-17 in order to determine whether or not they approve a proposed agreement between the Secretary of Agriculture and the Mohair Council of America, Inc. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced that the referendum will be conducted through the county offices of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

The agreement provides that the Secretary of Agriculture withhold up to 1.5 cents a pound from producers' payments on mohair marketed during 1966-69. The payment deduc-

tions, authorized by Section 709 of the National Wool Act, would be used by the Council to finance advertising and promotion programs for mohair and mohair products. The proposed agreement is similar to agreements under which advertising and sales promotion programs for wool and lamb have been conducted since 1955.

Record-Keeping Under the New Farm Labor Law

The U.S. Department of Labor recently issued proposed record-keeping requirements for farm operators whose employees come under the minimum wage law on February 1, 1967. Employers must observe the terms of the proposals as of February 1 in order to be in compliance with the requirements, pending final regulations. However, persons have until February 6, 1967, to submit written views on the proposals. Such statements should be sent to the Administrator, Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C. 20210.

The administrator of the Labor Department's Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions states that the proposals were necessary because of the 1966 Amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act, which became effective February 1. The legislation sets a minimum wage of \$1 per hour for certain farm workers effective on that date; \$1.15 per hour effective February 1, 1968; and \$1.30 per hour effective on February 1, 1969.

The Labor Department emphasizes that the wage law and record-keeping proposals apply to only about 390,000 farm laborers of employers who used more than 500 man-days of hired farm labor in any calendar quarter of the preceding calendar year. Family labor is exempt from the requirements; consequently, only about 1 percent of the Nation's farm operators are involved in the new legislation.

Copies of "Hired Farm Workers Under The Fair Labor Standards Act as Amended in 1966" (Publication 1161) may be obtained from any office of the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions.

Signups Announced for 1967 Crops

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced a 4-week signup period, beginning February 6 and ending March 3, 1967, for farmers who want to participate in this year's programs for wheat, feed grains, and upland cotton. Signups for the 1967 Cropland Adjustment Program (CAP), which began between November 14 and December 1, 1966, will also conclude on March 3, 1967.

The USDA says that weekly national compilations of returns are planned. Reports on the first week of the signups are expected to be available about mid-February.

"Morlam" Ewes



Agricultural Research Service scientists at Beltsville, Maryland, are producing a crop of lambs every 8 months with a new strain of sheep called "Morlam" (more lambs) and

a new system of sheep breeding. Top Morlam ewes have produced 2 lambs per pregnancy, or 6 lambs in 2 years — the goal of the breeding project. By selective breeding of the animals, the scientists hope to develop in the Morlam strain such economically important characteristics as year-round multiple births, long wool, hornlessness, and white, open faces.

In farm flocks, sheep usually lamb once each year. However, a ewe carries her lamb to term in about 5 months and does not need to nurse it for more than 2 months. In theory, she could complete three terms every 2 years. A production cycle of 8 months, instead of the usual 12 months, could result in a 50-percent increase in the lamb crop.

The 8-month cycle presents problems, however. Sheep generally do not come into heat between February and July, and they reach peak fertility in September and October. Thus, lambs generally are born in the early spring when there is ample pasture to supplement milk from their mothers. Breeds of sheep and individuals within breeds vary in their ability to propagate beyond the usual season. Rambouillets, Merinos, and Dorsets probably come closer to year-round fertility than other breeds.

Since 1961, individual ewes have been selected which could breed in the spring as well as in the fall. These Morlam ewes are bred in April, August, and December, and lambs are born in September, January, and May.

Two months after breeding, the ewes are checked for pregnancy with an ultrasonic analyzer developed for pregnancy diagnosis. If a ewe is not pregnant, it can be rebred with the next group without breaking the rhythm of 8-month lambings. In conventional sheep breeding, failure to conceive during the breeding season delays lambing for a period of 12 months.

Even with just one lambing a year, the Morlam strain would supply lambs at the season when prices are highest and when extra labor for lambing is available. Since first-generation ewes of the Morlam strain are still producing in the flock, they have not yet accumulated lifetime records. Consequently, the ARS scientists say that it is too early to evaluate the overall progress of the program.

Rate on Certificates of Interest Lowered

The rate of interest payable on certificates of interest issued by the Commodity Credit Corporation to banks and other lending institutions for financing 1966-crop price-support loans was lowered to 5.5 percent per annum, effective January 22, 1967. The rate for certificates had been 5.7 percent per annum since October 22, 1966, at which time it had been increased from 5.2 percent per annum. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says that the decrease in the interest rate is in line with recent changes in the money market.

The decrease in the interest rate is not retroactive. Consequently, lending institutions which have invested funds in 1966-crop price-support loans will earn interest on their investments at the rate of 4.9 percent per annum from the date of investment through July 31, 1966; at 5.2 percent per annum from August 1, 1966, through October 21, 1966; at 5.7 percent per annum from October 22, 1966, through January 21, 1967; and at 5.5 percent per annum thereafter.

Turkey Marketing Guide

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends that turkey producers limit 1967 output to no more than a 5-percent gain over last year's production and that the number of breeder hens be increased by not more than 4 percent. The favorable price-supply relationship in both 1965 and 1966 is stimulating turkey production in 1967, which could become excessive if turkey growers do not take adequate precautions, according to the USDA's Consumer and Marketing Service.

Although the demand for turkeys is expected to rise in 1967, the gain may be more moderate than in the preceding 2 years. Factors which contribute to the increased consumption of turkey meat are (1) rapidly rising consumer incomes, (2) a high level of employment, (3) less competition from red meats, and (4) the growth in popularity of further-processed foods containing turkey.

New Tomato Varieties for Texas

Three new commercial-type tomatoes — La Pinta, El Monte, and Chico Grande — are scheduled for production in Texas this spring, according to Texas A&M University. The new tomatoes are firm, pleasant tasting, attractive in color, and have good keeping qualities. They are resistant to disease and cracking and, under test conditions, have produced double the yields of present varieties.

The new tomatoes were developed at the Lower Rio Grande Valley Research and Extension Center by Paul Leeper, Horticulturist with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. Seed of the new varieties are available to growers for this spring's crop.

La Pinta and El Monte tomatoes are adapted mainly to the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, but Chico Grande is expected to produce well throughout the State. La Pinta cannot be harvested successfully until it is ripe, a factor which should boost the Valley's fresh tomato market. In field trials, the variety has produced from 10 to 18 tons per acre.

Texas A&M University says that the El Monte tomato lends itself to either processing

or the fresh market because it can be harvested in the green, vine-ripe, or ripe stages. It is not quite as large as the La Pinta variety but is redder in color. El Monte yields have ranged from 16.6 tons per acre in spring plantings to 20.2 tons per acre in the fall.

Chico Grande is related to the Chico tomato variety, which was also developed by Mr. Leeper and released in 1961. The new tomato is a blocky pear shape and is about twice as large as Chico, a characteristic that has lowered costs of peeling. Since the Chico Grande tomato matures in a relatively short time, the fruit is well adapted to machine harvesting.

Rural Recreational Enterprises Increase

Rural landowners in the United States continued to establish new outdoor recreational facilities at an accelerated pace in 1966, according to Secretary of Agriculture Freeman. With technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, farmers and ranchers converted 310,169 acres of land to recreational and wildlife use in 1966, representing a 10-percent increase over 1965. A total of 4,266 landowners established new income-producing recreational enterprises, and 524 of them now consider recreation to be a primary source of income on 147,412 acres of land.

Secretary Freeman says that income-producing facilities have a two-fold purpose — a town and a country purpose. These facilities offer the rural resident a new alternative use for his land, and they serve the city resident opportunities for fun and relaxation that the urban environment generally cannot provide.

The Food and Agriculture Act of 1962 expanded existing USDA programs that provide technical assistance and loans to farmers and ranchers in establishing income-producing rural recreational enterprises. Since then, more than 34,000 farmers and ranchers have established one or more recreational enterprises on their land. Of these, more than 3,200 — operating 1.2 million acres of land — consider recreational facilities to be a primary source of income.