

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY
USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT
POLICY

Voluntary Public

Date: 9/9/2014

Israel

Post: Tel Aviv

The Israeli Chief Rabbinate Eases Kosher Slaughter Regulations In An Attempt to Increase The Supply of Imported Meat

Report Categories:

Livestock and Products

Approved By:

Ron Verdonk (Minister-Counselor)

Prepared By:

Yossi Barak

Report Highlights:

In its efforts to bring down the cost of imported food, the Chief Rabbinate of the State of Israel (CR) is looking to increase the supply of imported kosher meat. It will be done by slaughterers, employed by the CR, who will certify as "kosher" the meat that came from kosher slaughtered cattle but which is disqualified by the Badatz slaughters.

General Information:

The Chief Rabbinate of the State of Israel (CR), headed by Chief Rabbi David Lau, is continuing to take unprecedented and unusual steps in an attempt to bring down the cost of imported kosher food. The most recent move is related to ritual slaughtering abroad and is intended to increase the supply of imported kosher meat. Still, importers of kosher meat are skeptical that these steps will have a significant impact on meat prices in the local market.

Approved kosher slaughter done abroad is conducted in a limited number of slaughterhouses which have adjusted their slaughter and processing lines to comply with CR regulations which requires "Jerusalem Slaughter". The slaughter process is handled by a team consisting of 5 -14 people, almost always Israeli. The importer employs the slaughterers and flies them from Israel at his expense in order to do the slaughtering. The limited number of kosher slaughterhouses abroad and the cost of flying the teams from Israel make the cost of imported kosher meat very expensive from the beginning. What makes this more complex and inflates the price further is the fact that the importers prefer to go with the most respected kosher labels (Mehadrin, Badatz) slaughtering, so that the final product meets the demand of as many communities as possible that consume kosher meat. (Mehadrin and Badatz can be consumed by all who are kosher observant.

Consumers who are considered Mehadrin or Badatz observant can't consume regular kosher meat). The problem with top kosher is that 30% - 50% of the meat that can be certified kosher (regular) is disqualified by Badatz slaughterers and sold in local markets as non - kosher meat and of course reduces the offered quantity of kosher meat for export.

Going forward, the Chief Rabbinate Council has decided that all teams of slaughterers that go abroad will include people who deal in "kashrut" (the kosher supervision and kosher law system) for the chief Rabbinate. Their role will be to certify as "kosher" the meat that came from kosher slaughtered cattle but is disqualified by the Badatz. The CR estimates that this step may increase imported quantities by at least 20 - 30 percent with almost no extra cost. The big importers consider this step unsatisfactory and doubt it will have an impact on meat prices, due to the higher cost of increased groups of slaughterers and due to the reluctance of the CR rabbis to certify kosher meat that was disqualified by the Badatz slaughterers.

Practically, the main problem that prevents a price reduction in beef prices in Israel is the "Law Against Fraud in Kashrut" from 1994, which bans imports of non - kosher meat. While imports of all other non - kosher food products, including cheese and non-kosher sea food is allowed, imports of non-kosher meat is completely forbidden.