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Report Highlights:

Bite size local news, Post reports and activity summaries wrapped by ATO Hong Kong. In this issue: The USA Pavilion at Asia Fruit Logistica showcases the best of American produce; U.S. beef and wine say Hello Ruby Tuesday; Hong Kong visitors continue to rise, but spending falls short; Major retailer DFI Retail Group charts a new course to compete with mainland retailers; Signals and savings from the “Silver Economy;” and ATO puts a focus on Macau.

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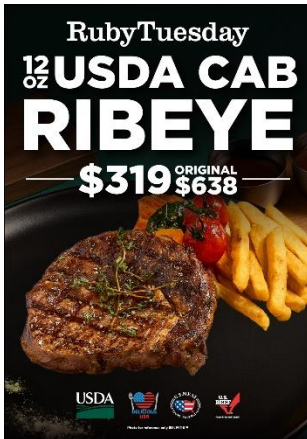
American Produce Shines at Asia Fruit Logistica 2025!



On September 3, U.S. Deputy Consul General, David Schlaefter joined ATO Hong Kong to inaugurate the USDA-sponsored USA Pavilion at Asia Fruit Logistica 2025, Asia's largest trade show for fresh fruit, vegetables, and tree nuts. This year's pavilion featured 12 U.S. exhibitors and over 80 U.S. and regional representatives from U.S. industry, offering a wide range of agricultural products, including apples, citrus, grapes, pears, cherries, blueberries, pistachios, potatoes, plums, olives, and dates. To support the delegation, ATO Hong Kong led participants on retail and wholesale market tours, provided a briefing on the region's markets for fresh fruit, and alongside colleagues from FAS China and FAS Bangkok, connected U.S. industry with key buyers throughout the show.

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ATO Launches U.S. Beef and Wine Promotion at Ruby Tuesday



With support from U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), ATO Hong Kong collaborated with Ruby Tuesday to promote an exclusive U.S. steak menu throughout the month of September. Ruby Tuesday, which opened its first restaurant in Hong Kong in 1995, has growth to operate 10 outlets, making Hong Kong the largest overseas outpost for the U.S. based restaurant group. As part of its 30th anniversary celebration, a special menu featuring Certified Angus Beef® ribeye with optional California wine pairing is available at all stores, as well as a promotional offer of a U.S. Butcher's Steak

at select outlets. If you have a non-branded U.S. food or beverage that you'd like to partner with ATO Hong Kong to promote, send us a message at ATOHongkong@usda.gov.

ATO Note on Macau: ATO is pleased to announce that we will hold our first post-pandemic Macau Partners Reception on September 25 at the MGM Hotel. The reception, which is co-organized with AmCham Macau and the Foreign Commercial Service, is a chance to connect with Macau's food and beverage stakeholders and to expand opportunities for U.S. agricultural products in this growing region. To mark the occasion, we are launching a separate Macau section of the Wonton which will exclusively focus on important news, activities, and events in the region.

ECONOMY



Hong Kong Could Hit Post-Covid High of 5 Million Tourists in August: Lawmaker [SCMP, Aug.31]

A Hong Kong tourism sector lawmaker noted that Hong Kong visitor numbers in August may have exceeded 5 million, marking a post-pandemic record. He attributed the surge to mega-events and a diversified tourism model but emphasized that overall visitor numbers remain at about 70 percent of pre-pandemic levels due to factors such as limited flight capacity, intense market competition, and a global decline in business travel. The meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) sector has recovered to only 76 percent of 2018 levels, as companies continue to control costs post-pandemic. He also highlighted Hong Kong's role as a co-host of the National Games in November as an opportunity to promote "sports tourism" and called for further efforts to strengthen the nighttime economy. **ATO**

Notes: Visitors to Hong Kong rose 35 percent to 46 million in 2024. In the first half of 2025, visitors climbed to 24 million, representing a 12 percent increase over the same period in 2024. Though still short of the record 65 million reached in 2018, government officials are optimistic, estimating that the

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total number of visitors will exceed 50 million. Hong Kong has made significant efforts to expand its tourism industry, including "sports tourism," which involves bringing world-class games to Kai Tak Arena to attract visitors.

Hong Kong Life Expectancy Rises, Highlighting Need for ‘Silver Economy’ Shift [[The Standard](#), Aug.26]

A new analysis of insurance data shows Hong Kong's average life expectancy has reached 88.6 years for women and 84.2 years for men, highlighting one of the world's longest-living populations. It emphasizes that an aging population with such longevity necessitates a transformative shift towards a "silver economy." The Actuarial Society of Hong Kong suggested the government and businesses prioritize the development of inclusive products, services, and community infrastructure tailored to the needs of older adults. **ATO Notes:** Approximately 22 percent of Hong Kong's population is over 65 years old. The number continues to grow as a result of the region's low fertility and high life expectancy. This segment of the population has significant purchasing power, presenting an opportunity for food and beverage products that promote a healthy, active lifestyle.

HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS



HK Restaurant Industry Divided over Foreign Labor Imports as Unemployment Rises [[The Standard](#), Aug.22]

A significant increase in Hong Kong's unemployment rate in the catering sector has sparked a public debate among industry leaders about the necessity of continuing to import foreign workers, highlighting a divide in approaches to addressing structural labor shortages. One side argues that the labor shortage is a long-term, structural issue exacerbated by an aging population. The other side, advocating for a pause in new applications, contends that the foreign labor scheme has achieved its goal, with approved quotas reaching 30,000, and that rising unemployment indicates local workers are available to fill these jobs.

ATO Notes: Hong Kong currently has more licensed restaurants and factory canteens (17,513) than in 2019 (15,861). However, restaurant receipts for the first and second quarters of 2025 totaled \$7 billion, a drop of 8 percent compared to the same period in 2019. This drop is primarily due to shifting consumer demographics which have increased demand for lower-priced meal options and reduced the number of high-end, premium restaurants.

Burger King Leaves Hong Kong's Peak as Black Sheep Rolls in [[Bloomberg](#), Aug.29]

The restaurant scene at The Peak has changed. The Burger King peak branch, which was the last location of the American fast-food chain in Hong Kong aside from the Hong Kong International Airport outlet, was replaced by an outlet operated by Black Sheep, a major player in the restaurant industry. This change reflects a broader trend happening across Hong Kong. Pricing has become a critical factor for restaurants to succeed in the city. While Black Sheep is known for its luxury and high-end restaurants, the company is now focusing more on affordable options as part of its growth strategy. According to

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Black Sheep's Chief Operating Officer, offering the right prices is essential for staying competitive in Hong Kong's restaurant market. **ATO Notes:** Black Sheep Restaurants, a Hong Kong-based hospitality group founded in 2012, has grown its presence steadily throughout the years, currently operating 35 restaurants. Conversely, Burger King, which once operated over 20 stores across Hong Kong, has seen its number of outlets decline since the pandemic.

RETAIL



Why Wellcome, 7-Eleven's Operator is Cutting Jobs: DFI Struggles with Price Wars, Changing Habits [[The Standard](#), Aug.26]

DFI Retail Group is struggling to adapt to fast-changing consumer habits in Hong Kong, where shoppers have become increasingly price-sensitive. Cross-border shopping in Shenzhen for cheaper groceries and daily goods is now common. Although DFI's four main businesses remain profitable, revenue growth has stalled, and margins are very thin. To win back budget-conscious shoppers, DFI is expanding private-label, offering lower prices than big-name brands while maintaining higher margins. It is also forging direct supply chain partnerships, such as sourcing food from mainland e-commerce platforms, to cut costs and compete with mainland retailers. **ATO Notes:** DFI Retail Group's layoffs reflect the growing challenges of Hong Kong's traditional retailer sector, driven by shifting consumer habits towards cross-border shopping and mainland e-commerce platforms that offer lower prices. DFI hopes that by creating efficiencies the retailer can compete with lower cost goods on offer in nearby Shenzhen.

Big Saving Ahead: '828 JoyYou Fest' Returns with \$8.28 Million Cash Rebate for Seniors [[The Standard](#), Aug.26]

Octopus Cards Limited announced the return of "828 JoyYou Fest," a two-week promotion offering seniors an HK\$8 cash rebate for single transactions of HK\$100 or more at participating stores, capped at HK\$800 per person. Partnering with 120 merchants, including fast food shops and supermarkets, the promotion covers over 6,600 spending points. Secretary for Labour and Welfare Chris Sun highlighted the initiative's role in supporting the silver economy and fostering community connections, with total rebates amounting to HK\$8.28 million. **ATO Notes:** This is an initiative specifically designed to boost spending among Hong Kong's elderly population, a demographic often overlooked but with purchasing power and loyalty potential. The government's support stems from the initiative aligning with broader economic objectives to stimulate local consumption and support senior welfare, making it more than just a commercial promotion.

MACAU



Hotels Log 8.49 Million Guests Between January and July [[Macaubusiness.com](https://macaubusiness.com), Sep.3]

Macau hotels hosted 8.49 million guests in the first seven months of 2025, a slight 0.3 percent decrease year-on-year, though occupancy rates rose by 4.7 percentage points overall. Guests stayed an average of 1.7 nights. Foreign package tour visitors surged by 12.6 percent to 132,000. In July, occupancy hit 91 percent, with 1.3 million guests, driven by eased travel policies for mainland Chinese tourists under the individual travel scheme. Macau had 147 accommodation providers offering 45,000 rooms, with 5-star and 4-star hotels achieving occupancy rates of 94.2 percent and 86.4 percent, respectively. **ATO Notes:** The weakening of the Chinese yuan in recent years has meant higher costs for mainland Chinese tourists visiting Macau. Mainland Chinese visitors account for over 70 percent of the region's annual visitors.

GDP Grew 5.1 Percent in the Second Quarter, Reversing an Earlier Contraction [[The Macau News](#), Aug.19]

Macau's economy is making gains, with gross domestic product (GDP) posting year-on-year growth of 5.1 percent in the second quarter of 2025, according to official figures released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The result is a welcome turnaround from the first quarter, which saw GDP suffer a year-on-year contraction of 1.3 percent. DSEC noted that Service exports led the recovery, increasing by 6 percent year-on-year and "fueled by a nearly 20 percent rise in visitor arrivals". Exports of "other tourism services" and gaming services recorded respective growth rates of 5.9 percent and 9.9 percent. In contrast, merchandise trade contracted compared with the second quarter of 2024, with exports of goods down 6.6 percent and imports falling 4.1 percent. Domestic demand remained stable with government spending up 1 percent year-on-year and private consumption edging up 0.3 percent. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong and Macau have demonstrated relevance by seeing a notable increase in the number of visitors. In contrast to Hong Kong, Macau's economy rests largely on the gaming industry, which accounts for about 40 percent of its GDP. Other key industries include retail, financial services, and tourism.

Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Ties Remain Central to Macau's Tourism Strategy [[TTG Asia](#), Sep.1]

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) continues to leverage its decades-long partnership with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) to cement the city's role as a global tourism hub. MGTO's director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes explained that hosting PATA's flagship events has been a key strategy. With tourism at the forefront of Macau's economy, the destination's visibility has benefited immensely over the decades from hosting some of the association's flagship events, including the PATA Travel Mart in 2010 and 2017, and most recently, the PATA Annual Summit in 2024. The PATA Annual Summit 2024, which drew around 450 delegates from 30 countries, was the first major post-lockdown PATA event in Macau. It served as a showcase for the city's latest developments as a Tourism + MICE destination and proved its role as a key platform between China and the rest of the world. **ATO Notes:** PATA members represent a diverse range of industries, including hotels, travel

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agencies, academia, and airlines. By being a member of PATA, MGTO can collaborate closely with these industries and various stakeholders to support the growth of Macau's tourism sector. Additionally, PATA's [visitor forecasts](#) provide valuable insights that serve as a reliable reference for understanding the tourism landscape across the Asia-Pacific region.

TRADE AND POLICY



Press Release - Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulation Amendment to Take Effect on April 1 Next Year [[CFS Press Release](#), Aug.21]

An Amendment Regulation effective April 1, 2026, will ban the sale of mini-cup konjac jelly confectionery under 45 millimeters in height or width and require choking warning labels on other prepackaged konjac jelly products. While konjac is considered safe by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the design and firm texture of mini-cup jellies pose choking risks, especially for children and the elderly. The government continues to promote food choking prevention, including advising against directly sucking mini-cup konjac jellies. **ATO Notes:** After reviewing the potential choking hazards associated with the consumption of mini-cup Konjac-containing jelly confectionery products, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) proposed amendments to the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap. 132W) to strengthen the regulation on Konjac-containing jelly confectionery. The revised standard requires the labeling of a warning statement on the prevention of choking hazard in both English and Chinese, and mini-cup jelly confectionary products should not contain Konjac.

Press Release - CFS Announces Food Safety Report for July [[CFS Press Release](#), Aug.29]

CFS released the findings of its food safety report for last month. The results of about 7,000 food samples tested (including food items purchased online) were found to be satisfactory except for 11 unsatisfactory samples. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.8 per cent. **ATO Notes:** To better monitor and control food safety in Hong Kong, the CFS operates under the Food Surveillance Program (FSP), which allows the Centre to conduct safety tests on approximately 65,000 food samples each year. The FSP provides routine, targeted, and seasonal surveillance. The CFS will collect food samples and test them against chemical, microbiological, and radiological standards. Food surveillance results are reported monthly.

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ATO EVENTS CALENDAR



UPCOMING EVENTS

Sep 2025

- Sep. 2 - 4 Restaurant, Bar, and Café Hong Kong (ASMI)
- Sep. 3 - 5 Asia Fruit Logistica (ATO HK)
- Sep. 1- Sep. 30 U.S. Beef and Wine Promotion – Ruby Tuesday (ATO HK, USMEF)
- Sep. 25 FAS / FCS Macau Partners Reception
- Sep. 28 – Oct 12 American Ginseng Retail Promotion (ATO HK)

Oct 2025

- Oct. 2 – 3 U.S. Ingredients Seminar – Hong Kong Polytechnic University (ATO HK)
- Oct. 4 & Oct. 11 Pitmaster Smoking Class – Smoke & Barrel (ATO HK)
- Oct. 23-27 Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival (HK Tourism Board)

Nov 2025

- Nov. 4 The Great American Texas Barbecue (USMEF, ATO HK)
- Nov. 7 – Nov. 20 U.S. Thanksgiving Festival – DeliFans (ATO HK, USAPEEC)
- Nov. 27 – 29 Whisky Live Macau (Whisky Magazine International Chinese Edition - Hong Kong & Macau)

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Attachments:

No Attachments.