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Report Highlights:

Bite size local news, Post reports and activity summaries wrapped by ATO Hong Kong. In this issue: U.S. agricultural exports to Hong Kong increase six percent in 2025; ATO shares American culinary history with students at Hong Kong Polytechnic University; U.S. pet food brands expand market leadership at the Hong Kong Pet Show; Washington's Cosmic Crisp apples expand retail presence; Hong Kong's economy grows 3.5 percent in 2025 amid a tourism rebound but uneven domestic consumption; the HKSAR prepares its first locally formulated Five-Year Plan aligned with national priorities; labor shortages and cross-border dining reshape the foodservice sector; retail sales reflect a widening gap between visitor-driven luxury spending and cautious household demand; and Macau weighs tourism tax reform while navigating uneven recovery in non-gaming spending.



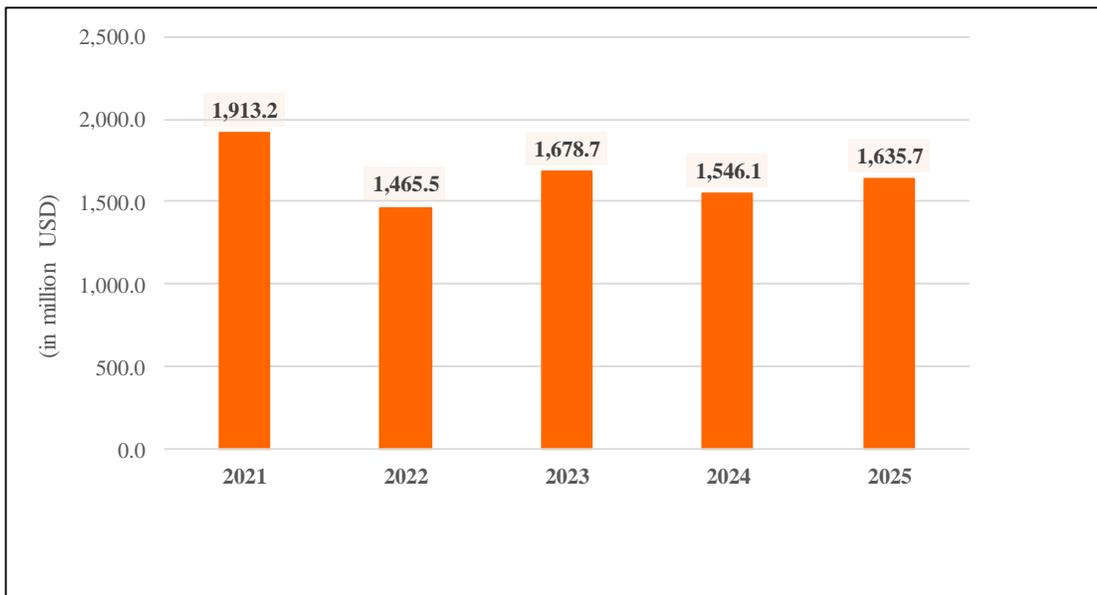
THE HONG KONG WONTON

wrapped by ATO Hong Kong

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U.S. Ag Exports to Hong Kong Up Six Percent in 2025; Top 10 Market for Beef, Fresh Fruit, Seafood, and Wine

Hong Kong : U.S. Agricultural and Related Products Exports



U.S. exports of agricultural and related products to Hong Kong grew six percent in 2025, led by strong demand for beef and food preparations, such as baking mixes and soups. Hong Kong continued to be a top ten destination for many consumer-oriented products, including food preparations (#5), fresh fruit (#6), beef (#7), seafood (#8), processed vegetables (#9), and wine (#9). Hong Kong’s rebounding economy and strong consumer demand for premium products were key factors in boosting exports, including beef and beef products which declined globally by 11 percent but grew 20 percent to \$479.2 million.

THE HONG KONG WONTON

ATO Delivers Lecture at Hong Kong Polytechnic University on the History and Evolution of American Cuisine



On February 9, ATO Hong Kong visited the Hong Kong Polytechnic University’s School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM), a global leader in hospitality education, to deliver a guest lecture on American culinary history and tradition. The 90-minute lecture highlighted the role of agriculture, immigration, innovation, and pop-culture in shaping America’s culinary history and evolution. Thanks to the PolyU team for the invitation and the SHTM students for the great questions!

U.S. Pet Food Expands Market Leadership at Hong Kong Pet Show



From January 29 to February 2, seven U.S. pet food brands exhibited at the Hong Kong Pet Show through their local distributors, with support from Food Export–Midwest & Northeast. Two additional U.S. companies debuted in the market, further expanding the U.S. presence in this high-value, import-

THE HONG KONG WONTON

dependent sector. The show featured nearly 1,000 booths and more than 320 exhibitors, attracting approximately 376,000 visitors, with on-site sales exceeding \$14 million.

ATO Hong Kong met with participating brands to discuss market trends, regulatory considerations, and promotional strategies to strengthen U.S. competitiveness. The United States has remained Hong Kong's leading pet food supplier for more than two decades, with imports totaling \$28 million in 2025. U.S. products continue to benefit from strong consumer confidence in their quality, safety standards, and advanced nutritional formulation.

Washington's Cosmic Crisp Gains Retail Foothold in Hong Kong



The Washington Apple Commission launched a four-week promotion of its premium Cosmic Crisp apple in Hong Kong at 10 supermarkets under the DFI Retail Group. ATO Hong Kong facilitated coordination that led to the purchase of three containers to support the campaign. Positioned through DFI's upscale retail banners, the promotion highlights continued opportunities for premium U.S. fresh fruit in Hong Kong's zero-tariff, high-income market, where consumer preference for high-quality, branded produce remains strong.

ECONOMY



Advance Estimates on Gross Domestic Product for Fourth Quarter and Whole Year of 2025 [C&SD, Jan.30]

Hong Kong's real GDP grew 3.5 percent in 2025, accelerating from 2.6 percent in 2024 and marking the third consecutive year of expansion. The economy strengthened further in Q4 2025, with goods exports up 12 percent and services exports rising notably due to sustained inbound tourism and cross-boundary financial activities. Private consumption increased as the local market gradually improved from second quarter onward. [ATO Notes: Hong Kong's private consumption expenditure grew in 2025, expanding](#)

THE HONG KONG WONTON

by 1.7 percent, signaling a gradual recovery in domestic demand. The rebound in visitor arrivals—reaching nearly 50 million, up 12 percent year-on-year, with particularly strong 15 percent growth from non-Mainland markets—provided meaningful support to tourism-related sectors including hospitality, food service, and luxury retail. While consumption momentum improved in the second half of the year, growth remains uneven across sectors, suggesting continued caution among local consumers despite stronger external demand.

Hong Kong to Come up with Its First Five-Year Plan [[RTHK](#), Feb.2]

The SAR government will formulate its own five-year plan for the first time, to align with that of the nation's. The Hong Kong government plans to set their sights on more emerging markets going forward by prioritizing visits to places in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Last year, the Hong Kong Chief Executive led a delegation to visit Kuwait and Qatar, and he said the trip's results were coming in as investment projects have gradually been implemented. **ATO Notes:** China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) positions Hong Kong as both a global financial hub and a platform for innovation and technology development. The HKSAR's decision to formulate its own five-year plan signals closer policy alignment with national priorities while preserving Hong Kong's unique institutional strengths. For U.S. businesses, Hong Kong continues to offer a transparent regulatory framework, an independent judiciary, free capital flows, and world-class financial infrastructure. As a “super-connector” between mainland China and international markets, Hong Kong remains strategically positioned to facilitate cross-border investment, logistics, and regional headquarters operations targeting both established and emerging markets.

HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS



Imported Labor Scheme Hits 22,000 Applications [[The Standard](#), Jan.29]

Hong Kong's Enhanced Supplementary Labor Scheme received more than 22,000 applications covering over 170,000 workers by the end of December, with waiters and junior chefs accounting for the largest share of approvals. The government will adopt a principle of “precise adjustment,” prioritizing manpower needs in catering roles while ensuring local workers remain the first choice for employment. **ATO Notes:** Industry stakeholders report that the Enhanced Supplementary Labor Scheme has helped ease staffing shortages, particularly during peak dining periods and holidays. While the program provides short-term operational relief, labor costs and workforce sustainability remain ongoing concerns for the foodservice sector.

As Hong Kong's Kam Shing Restaurant Shuts Down on Saturday, Owner Seeks New Challenge [[SCMP](#), Jan.29]

Recent restaurant closures have been blamed on Hong Kong's sluggish economy and a structural shift in residents opting to spend across the border. However, Kam Shing Restaurant, a 34-year-old

THE HONG KONG WONTON

eatery closed down due to the owner's desire to pursue personal growth, despite the business performing well and enjoying the support of the neighborhood. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong's foodservice sector continues to undergo structural adjustment, driven by rising rents, labor costs, and shifting consumer behavior. Chinese restaurants have been disproportionately affected, with receipts in 2025 remaining 26 percent below the 2018 peak. Increased cross-border dining in mainland China, particularly Shenzhen, has intensified competitive pressure. For more information on the city's foodservice industry, please refer to [Hong Kong HRI Annual 2025-2026](#).

Hong Kong Restaurant Receipts up 0.9 Percent in Quarter Four, Full-Year Value Rises 0.2 Percent as Volumes Dip 0.9 Percent [[Dimsum Daily](#), Feb.3]

The Census and Statistics Department reported provisional restaurant receipts of \$3.56 billion (\$27.8 billion HKD) for the fourth quarter of 2025, up 0.9 percent year on year, while purchases rose 2.5 percent. After adjusting for prices, overall dining volumes were broadly unchanged from a year earlier. Across 2025, Chinese restaurants declined 2.9 percent in value and 4.3 percent in volume, non-Chinese restaurants advanced 4.0 percent and 3.4 percent respectively. A government spokesperson said receipts returned to growth in the fourth quarter and edged up for the year, with prospects supported by firmer local sentiment, rising employment incomes and sustained inbound tourism. **ATO Notes:** The weakness in Chinese restaurant performance reflects intensified cross-border competition from neighboring Shenzhen, where lower operating costs translate into more competitive pricing. Hong Kong residents are increasingly traveling north for dining and leisure consumption. Meanwhile, non-Chinese restaurants have shown greater resilience, suggesting evolving consumer preferences and market segmentation within the local foodservice industry.

Pet-Friendly Restaurant on the Way, but Slow Uptake Expected: Environment Chief [[The Standard](#), Feb.10]

Hong Kong is preparing to allow dogs in licensed restaurants through a new pet-friendly policy, but Secretary for Environment and Ecology Tse Chin-wan said on Tuesday that initial applications from eateries are expected to be limited. He noted that while the restaurant industry has shown strong interest, many operators are taking a wait-and-see approach before applying. Approved restaurants must display mandatory signage at entrances, ensure dogs stay off tables, and refrain from preparing dog food on-site. **ATO Notes:** Under the current Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132, Section 56), dogs are prohibited on licensed food premises except for service animals. The proposed relaxation could create niche opportunities for pet-friendly establishments, particularly those located in shopping malls with pet-friendly policies or offering outdoor dining areas. Initial adoption may be gradual as operators assess operational implications and customer response.

Hong Kong Hotels, Tourist-Area Eateries Report Brisk Trade over Lunar New Year Holiday [[SCMP](#), Feb.19]

Hong Kong's hotels and tourist-area restaurants have reported robust business during the Lunar New Year holiday, even as an increase in outbound travel by residents underscored the city's increasingly visitor-driven festival economy. Industry leaders linked this to the longer Spring Festival holiday, Valentine's Day, and worsening ties between China and Japan, which brought more mainland tourists to Hong Kong. **ATO Notes:** The Individual Visit Scheme (IVS), introduced in 2003 under the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), remains a critical driver of mainland tourist arrivals. The scheme has expanded from four Guangdong cities to 59 mainland cities. Since 2024, Shenzhen residents

THE HONG KONG WONTON

have also been eligible for multiple-entry permits, further supporting short-haul tourism flows. Continued IVS expansion could sustain visitor-driven consumption, particularly in hospitality and foodservice sectors.

RETAIL



Provisional Statistics of Retail Sales for December 2025 and Whole Year of 2025 [[Census and Statistics Department](#), Feb.3]

Hong Kong's food retail sector experienced sluggish growth in 2025 with supermarket sales down 0.6 percent and food/beverage sales up only 1.6 percent, indicating restrained household consumption despite overall economic improvement. Consumer spending patterns show a clear divide between tourism-driven luxury purchases (jewelry up 1.9 percent) and declining everyday categories (apparel down 3.4 percent, footwear down 6.5 percent), reflecting the sector's heavy dependence on visitor spending. The 12.8 percent jump in online retail sales demonstrates accelerating digital adoption, fundamentally reshaping how consumers purchase both food and non-food items. **ATO Notes:** While Hong Kong's retail sales sustained strong year-on-year growth of 6.5 percent in November and 6.6 percent in December, declining supermarket sales throughout late 2025 reveal a troubling gap between tourism-driven luxury spending and cautious local consumption. Residents continue to spend conservatively on everyday necessities, increasingly seeking more economical options across the border in mainland China.

Mainland China Group wins Deal to Operate Hong Kong Harbor Front Event Space [[SCMP](#), Feb.23]

Hong Kong's award of the Hung Hom pier project to mainland-backed Bay Area Media, whose parent company operates prominent retail brands like Chung Hwa Bookstore and Commercial Press, marks a significant Greater Bay Area collaboration in waterfront commercial development. The mixed-use space will combine retail food and beverage facilities with cultural markets and entertainment, opening in phases from next month as part of Hong Kong's broader strategy to enhance harbor front attractions. **ATO Notes:** This cross-border partnership reflects deepening GBA integration in Hong Kong's retail, cultural, and tourism sectors. Hong Kong currently hosts 1,510 regional headquarters, 2,500 regional offices, and 7,060 local offices with parent companies located outside Hong Kong. Among these companies, the import/export, wholesale and retail trades, accommodation, and food services sectors generated the highest business receipts.

THE HONG KONG WONTON

TRADE AND POLICY



Promoting Development of Local Agriculture [[HKSAR](#), Jan.28]

AFCED will launch a unified brand in mid-2026 for government-recognized high-quality local agricultural and fisheries products, replacing the existing Accredited Fish Farm Scheme and Accredited Farm Scheme. The new brand will feature certification, testing, and traceability mechanisms to enhance product competitiveness and consumer confidence. **ATO Notes:** Local crop production has remained relatively stable over the past five years at about 15,000 tons annually. The introduction of a unified government-backed brand in mid-2026 aims to strengthen traceability, consumer confidence, and product differentiation in a market heavily reliant on imports. While local production accounts for only a small share of total food supply, branding and certification may enhance competitiveness in premium and niche segments.

Hong Kong Suspends Imports of Poultry Meat and Products from 12 U.S. Counties in Feb. 2026 [[CFS](#), Feb.2; [CFS](#), Feb.10; [CFS](#), Feb.16; [CFS](#), Feb.24]

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has suspended poultry imports from 12 counties following a notification from the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). **ATO Notes:** U.S. poultry meat exports to Hong Kong dropped 36 percent in 2025 to \$86.8 million compared to 2024, while egg exports fell even more dramatically by 47.3 percent to just \$0.9 million.

Mainland Delegation Visits Hong Kong to Ensure Sufficient Supply of Variety of Food During Chinese New Year [[HKSAR Press Release](#), Feb.9]

The Deputy Director General of China's Ministry of Commerce led a delegation to Hong Kong to assess mainland food supply and ensure sufficient high-quality provisions during Chinese New Year. Mainland authorities have strengthened supply sources and contingency plans to ensure stability and safety, while Hong Kong proactively aligns food-related initiatives with the National 15th Five-Year Plan. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong remains structurally dependent on the mainland for food supply, importing the vast majority of its fresh vegetables and live pigs from China. With approximately seven square kilometers of active farmland, local production contributes roughly 2 percent of fresh vegetables and 9 percent of live pigs consumed. Stable cross-border logistics and policy coordination are therefore critical to maintaining food security and price stability in the region.

THE HONG KONG WONTON

MACAU



Committee Proposes Removing 5 Percent Tax in Draft Food and Beverage Bill [[Macau Daily Times](#), Feb.13]

Members of the Legislative Assembly’s Third Standing Committee in Macau have proposed revisions to the draft Food and Beverage Establishments Law that would remove the 5 percent tourism tax on establishments in hotels. The committee aims to finalize recommendations by mid-March, enabling the Legislative Assembly to pass the bill for an expected effective date of July 1. **ATO Notes:** Macau currently levies a 5 percent tourism tax on most hotel and hospitality establishments, with limited exemptions for lower-tier accommodations and simple catering outlets. Removing the tax could enhance price competitiveness and stimulate visitor spending, particularly as Macau seeks to diversify beyond gaming revenues and strengthen its broader tourism appeal.

Association says 2026 off to Strong Start, Forecasts Stable Year [[Macau Daily Times](#), Feb.24]

The Macau Economic Association forecasts stable growth for 2026 through April, though mainland consumer confidence remains weak and per capita non-gaming spending continues declining despite surging hotel occupancy and visitor arrivals. Recognition of 90 establishments in the Forbes Travel Guide strengthens Macau's tourism position, but the association warns that economic recovery remains unbalanced. **ATO Notes:** While high hotel occupancy and international recognition support Macau’s tourism recovery, weak Mainland consumer confidence and declining per capita non-gaming spending indicate that recovery remains uneven. Long-term stability will depend on attracting higher-value visitors and expanding non-gaming sectors such as entertainment, conventions, retail, and foodservice.

THE HONG KONG WONTON

ATO EVENTS CALENDAR



UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. – Mar. **Washington Apple Retail Promotion**

Mar. 2026

Mar. 12 – Mar. 14

Hong Kong International Fur & Fashion Fair

Asia Pacific Leather Fair 2026 (LHCA)

Mar. 23

Poly U American Cuisine Guest Chef Demonstration (ATOHK)

Mar. 24

Cotton USA Outlook (CCI)

Apr. 2026

Apr. 15

U.S. Men's and Women's National Team Rugby Sevens Reception (with FCS)

May 2026

May 26 – 28

Vinexpo Asia (CWI, OWB)

May 29

The 1976 Judgment of Paris Blind Tasting – 50th Anniversary Celebration (CWI)

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