

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Guatemala

Post: Guatemala

U.S. Lamb Gains Market Access

Report Categories:

Export Accomplishments - Market Access

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Report Highlights:

U.S. lamb can now be exported to Guatemala with an FSIS export certificate (9060-5). Previously approved seafood export facilities can continue to export to Guatemala with a NOAA export certificate.

General Information:

In September, Guatemala removed Ministerial Decree 382-2014 that required on-site, plant-by-plant inspections for meat exports (see GAIN report 10/31/2016). However, without an official protocol to replace the decree, previously approved exporting facilities were unable to renew the five-year permission to export and new facilities could not apply to export. On November 18, FAS/Guatemala met with the new Acting Food Safety Director at the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGA) who stated that in addition to allowing U.S. origin lamb into the country now, MAGA would also recognize National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) certificates for previously approved seafood exporting facilities. FAS/Guatemala is working with MAGA to clarify and expand the new procedure to include all NOAA-certified seafood, and all FSIS-inspected products which includes other eligible red meats and table eggs. Guatemalan importers have already placed orders for U.S. lamb and expect the first shipments to arrive in mid-December.

Under the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), Guatemala granted equivalence recognition to the U.S. inspection system for meat and meat products, but the equivalence regulation issued in 2006 only made reference to beef, poultry, and pork, leaving out other FSIS-inspected products. Because of this oversight, other animal products were subject to Decree 382-2014, that required all companies that export non-processed food of animal or plant origin to ask their own government to request MAGA to conduct an inspection of the exporter's facility. The exporter was required to pay all of the costs associated with this inspection. Seafood was also affected by this decree.

Comment: While the Guatemalan market for lamb is small, this is a victory that shows Guatemala's willingness to correct SPS policies that acted as technical barriers to trade. FAS/Guatemala has continually demonstrated that the U.S. inspection system offers the same level of food safety while facilitating commercial trade and the new Food Safety Director recognized this. MAGA continues its efforts to define a sound regulation that meets food safety needs, but it lacks the capacity to implement regulations based on risk analysis.