

USTR NEWS

UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

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For Immediate Release:

May 12, 2008

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Statement by U.S. Trade Representative Susan C. Schwab on Recent Developments in Korea

“On May 8th, Prime Minister Han Seung-soo delivered a televised statement in Korea regarding U.S. beef imports, stating that the Korean government will give its utmost priority to protecting its citizens’ health. The United States accepts and supports the Prime Minister’s statement and would not ask for anything different. Like Korea, we take public health and safety concerns very seriously and believe that every government has the responsibility to protect its citizens from health and safety risks. Accordingly, the U.S. government has taken, and will continue to take, steps to ensure that U.S. beef, which is currently enjoyed by consumers in the United States and around the world every day, is and remains safe.

“The GATT and the WTO SPS Agreement preserve each country's sovereignty so that every government can ensure the safety of its citizens, and that includes food safety. All WTO members are also protected under these provisions by the knowledge they will be used with care and that any food safety actions will be based on science. The United States recognizes that Article XX of the GATT preserves Korea’s right to take measures necessary to protect public health, so long as the requirements of that article are met. Beyond the GATT and WTO SPS protections, our recently concluded protocol with Korea should address any concerns of Korean consumers by building several layers of procedures and safety measures to ensure that imported U.S. beef is safe.”

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