

USTR NEWS

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USTR and USDA Caution Trading Partners to Base Food Safety Measures on Science During Human Swine Influenza Outbreak

WASHINGTON, D.C. – United States Trade Representative Ron Kirk and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on Monday that while the United States continues to closely monitor for cases of the new H1N1 human influenza, the American food supply is safe. USTR and USDA are working closely with the Departments of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor the situation carefully.

In their announcement, Kirk and Vilsack cite references from the World Health Organization (WHO) and CDC statements that there is no evidence of swine influenza being transmitted by meat. According to the CDC website (http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/swineflu_you.htm), “Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.”

Addressing potential concerns about the safety of U.S. pork and pork products, Secretary Vilsack stated that: “While there is no evidence at this time that swine has been infected with this virus, the science is clear that consuming or handling pork, consistent with safe handling practices, is of no risk to consumers.”

In response, Ambassador Kirk urged all trading partners to base any food safety measures taken to protect their populations on scientific evidence and in accordance with their international obligations. In a statement, Kirk said that “restrictions on U.S. pork or pork products or any meat products from the United States resulting from the recent outbreak do not appear to be based on scientific evidence and may result in serious trade disruptions without cause.”

BACKGROUND

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States has announced that they have identified 40 cases of new H1N1 human influenza in the United States including 7 affected people in California, 2 in Kansas, 28 in New York, 1 in Ohio and 2 in Texas. All were mild cases with no deaths.

There have been no reports of the new H1N1 human influenza occurring in swine in the United States.

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