

US market to open doors to UK lamb from 2022

Exports of British lamb to the US market can resume from next year after more than two decades of restrictions.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) today confirmed it has amended the rule which currently prevents imports of lamb from the UK into the USA. The amended “small ruminant rule” will come into force on 3 January 2022.

This exciting new development means that over 300 million US consumers will soon be able to enjoy the UK’s world renowned lamb. It is estimated that this market will be worth £37 million in the first five years of trade.

In a call earlier today with his US counterpart Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Environment Secretary George Eustice expressed his delight at the news. The Ministers committed to continue to work together in the months ahead.

Today’s update comes after President Biden committed to lift the ban on British lamb during the Prime Minister’s visit to the White House in September, and follows an easing on restrictions on British beef exports earlier this year.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Today’s great news follows years of negotiations and builds on the success in securing the resumption of UK beef exports to the US. UK lamb is renowned for its high quality, food safety and welfare standards. Millions of US consumers will now be able to enjoy British lamb as early as next year.

The US market for lamb is growing as consumer trends change and there are now new opportunities for farmers and meat processors in this market.

The small ruminant rule (SRR) previously restricted access to the US market for all sheep meat from the UK, as well as a number of other countries including EU member states and Canada.

This development clears the way for Defra to work with the Department for International Trade (DIT) and UK food safety authorities, such as the FSA, DAERA and FSS, and counterparts in the USA, in completing the final necessary steps to achieving the full resumption of UK lamb exports to the USA.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

This is fantastic news that brings UK farmers a step closer to putting their first-class lamb on American menus for the first time in more than 20 years.

The UK exported £436.4 million worth of lamb to the world last year and over £29 million worth of meat to the US. We want those numbers to grow and this win will help achieve that.

Our teams are working hard to unlock multi-million-pound markets for brilliant UK businesses and I will be banging the drum for them when I visit the US next week.

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board International Market Development Director Dr Phil Hadley said:

This is fantastic news for our sheep producers and exporters.

The US market is estimated to be worth £37 million over the first five years of trade and presents a further valuable opportunity for the UK sheep sector.

Today's announcement means lamb exports will complement our existing pork and beef trade to the US, which was worth an impressive £22 million to industry in the first nine months of 2021. Gaining access to the US further cements our reputation as being world renowned producers of high quality lamb and we look forward to seeing our products on US plates in the New Year.

NFU President Minette Batters said:

It's excellent to hear that the work of the UK government and levy boards has finally helped secure access for British lamb to the United States. British lamb is a fantastic, sustainable product that is recognised around the world for its quality and we know there is demand for it in the US.

This is exactly the sort of export opportunity we need to see the government pursuing and is something we strongly support. This is a positive step for Britain's lamb producers and we would urge the government to continue opening up new markets around the world.