



1 April 2021

(21-2750)

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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: English

**CHINA'S COVID-19 RELATED TRADE ACTIONS AGAINST FOOD AND  
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS – [SPECIFIC TRADE CONCERN 487](#)**

SUBMISSION BY THE UNITED STATES

The following submission, received on 30 March 2021, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the United States.

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1.1. The United States understands the concerns of consumers around the world who want food producers, processors, and regulators to act to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We all must work together to clearly and effectively communicate to consumers the risk of COVID-19 transmission associated with food and agricultural products.

1.2. We are concerned by several measures China continues to implement, including requirements for exporter statements, suspension of imports from facilities where local media report worker cases of COVID-19, testing requirements for imported foods, and port-of-entry rejections of imported products when positive nucleic acid test results are reported.

1.3. The United States and several other Members shared their concerns about the China's measures during the November 2020 SPS Committee meeting and requested China to withdraw these trade disruptive and non-science based restrictions. Through notification [G/SPS/N/CHN/1173](#), China indicated that it is implementing its measures on an emergency basis. To maintain this measure, China must seek to obtain enough evidence to do so.

1.4. China has not provided any science-based justification or testing results to support the need for, or efficacy of, these measures. After more than a year since the COVID-19 outbreak was declared an international public health emergency, the US Department of Agriculture, the US Food and Drug Administration and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continue to underscore that there is no credible evidence of food or food packaging associated with, or as a source of, viral transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus causing COVID-19.

1.5. It is particularly important to note that COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that is spread from person to person, unlike foodborne or gastrointestinal viruses that often make people ill through contaminated food. While there are relatively few reports of the virus being detected on food and packaging, most studies focus primarily on the detection of the virus' genetic fingerprint rather than evidence of transmission of virus resulting in human infection.

1.6. Our understanding, that the risk is exceedingly low for transmission of SARS-CoV-2 to humans via food and food packaging, is based upon the best available information from scientific bodies across the globe, including a continued international consensus.

1.7. For example, a recent opinion from the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF), stated: "Despite the billions of meals and food packages handled since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, to date there has not been any evidence that food, food packaging or food handling is a source or important transmission route for SARS-CoV-2 resulting in COVID-19".

1.8. Members are confronted by an increasing number of COVID-19-related import restrictions imposed by China on a variety of food and agricultural commodities. Unjustified trade restrictions adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic threaten the integrity of global food supply chains at a time when many WTO Members are already struggling to maintain food security.

1.9. As Members of the WTO, we encourage China to withdraw these measures and work with its global partners to support the guidance of international organizations by building the body of scientific evidence on COVID-19. Collaborative engagement is essential as we collectively combat the pandemic, avoid unnecessary barriers to trade on food and agricultural products, and maintain food security for all.

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