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Post: Miami ATO

CBATO Facilitates Release of Food Shipment Detained in St. Lucia

Report Categories:

Export Accomplishments - Other

Trade Policy Incident Report

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Report Highlights:

FAS' Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office (CBATO) in Miami facilitates the release of a \$152,000 shipment of U.S. foods, detained in St. Lucia due to confusion over the certification documents for beef products included in the shipment.

General Information:

Issue

On March 28, the CBATO learned that St. Lucia had detained a shipment of U.S. food products due to confusion over the certification documents for the beef products included in the shipment.

Background

On March 8, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announced a change in its export certification process for several countries, including St. Lucia, that would become effective on March 19. On March 13, the CBATO received a call from the St. Lucia Veterinary Service inquiring about such change. On March 14, the CBATO communicated the change in writing to the St. Lucia Vet Service explaining that it simply reflected a streamlining of USDA's internal process to administer the Export Verification Less Than 30 Months of Age (EV LT30) program. In its communication the CBATO also explained that the EV LT30 program remained in place.

FAS (CBATO) Actions

Upon learning of the detained shipment, the CBATO communicated with St. Lucia veterinary authorities once again, providing further clarification on the matter and reiterating assurances that the EV LT30 program for St. Lucia remained fully in place and that FSIS inspection personnel continued to verify the eligibility of the establishment and product. The CBATO also provided the St. Lucia Veterinary Service with the on-line link to the AMS Official Listing of Eligible Suppliers to USDA's Bovine EV LT30 program, where they can verify that the plants specified on the export certificates are actually eligible suppliers.

In order to minimize any confusion that the modification of the certification process might have on U.S. exporters, the CBATO communicated with the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) to request that they inform their membership of the change. USMEF did so in two separate messages, specifically noting that the EV LT30 program for St. Lucia remained in place. The CBATO also kept the concerned agencies at USDA headquarters fully apprised of the situation.

Impact

As a result of the CBATO's actions, the detained shipment was cleared. Although the beef products in question were valued at \$15,000, the full container of mixed foods being detained had a total value of \$152,000 from multiple U.S. suppliers. The Fort Lauderdale, Florida, exporter at the center of this issue later wrote to the CBATO: "We thank you again for your help in getting this container released. Without your speedy help, there could have been a complete loss of our and other suppliers' products."

Post's dialogue with the St. Lucia Veterinary Service also helped clarify the export certification situation for all beef suppliers doing business with St. Lucian customers. At least two other companies with beef products ready to be shipped to St Lucia also benefitted from the outcome.

