Committee
On Finance
Max Baucus, Ranking Member

BAUCUS TO JAPANESE AMBASSADOR:
IMPORTS OF U.S. BEEF MUST RESUME
Senator tells Japan's ambassador that time is of the essence

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, commented this morning following a late Wednesday meeting with Japan's Ambassador to the United States, Ryozo Kato, and Senate Finance Chairman Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) to discuss Japan's renewed ban on U.S. beef imports. Senator Baucus warned Ambassador Kato that Japan must act soon to avoid provoking a strong reaction by the U.S. Congress.

"I told the Ambassador that after many of us worked for two long years to open Japan's market to U.S. beef imports, there is a lot of frustration in the Congress that the Japanese market is once again closed," Baucus said. **"The technical violation of the agreement that reopened Japan's beef market should have been treated as a customs issue, not a health issue. Shutting off imports from all U.S. plants was an unwarranted reaction out of all proportion."**

Japan resumed imports of U.S. beef from cattle less than 20 months of on December 12, after Japan's Food Safety Commission validated the safety of U.S. beef. However, Japan again suspended imports on January 20 after a shipment of veal was found to contain a backbone. The backbone at issue carried no health risk because it was in beef of less than 30 months old. However, the agreement between Japan and the United States, which led Japan to resume beef imports after a two-year ban, required backbones to be removed from shipments of U.S. beef.

"There is nothing unsafe about U.S. beef. Japan's Food Safety Commission acknowledged the safety of U.S. beef when it lifted its ban last month, and sound science does not support a ban now," said Baucus today. **"Any suggestions by Japanese politicians that U.S. beef is somehow unsafe are unfounded and completely unacceptable."**

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