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BAUCUS CONTINUES PRESSURE ON JAPAN BEEF BAN
Finance Committee leaders met with Ambassador Kato today

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member on the Senate Finance Committee, today told Japanese Ambassador Ryozo Kato that Japan should end its ban on American beef immediately. Ambassador Kato visited Baucus and Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) on Capitol Hill today to discuss the beef ban and other trade issues. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is expected to visit the U.S. in late June.

"Today I reiterated to Ambassador Kato the facts of the case: that U.S. beef is the safest and highest-quality in the world, and that Japan's current ban is not based on sound science," said Baucus. **"It's past time for Japan to resume beef trade with the United States."**

In 2003, Japan banned U.S. beef after a cow in Washington state tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE. In December of 2005, Japan lifted its two-year old ban on U.S. beef from cattle less than 20 months of age, but suspended imports again in January after a Japan-bound veal shipment was found to contain a backbone that posed no risk to human health. Baucus met with Kato immediately following the reinstatement of Japan's beef ban, making today's meeting their second this year.

Baucus also sent a letter to Prime Minister Koizumi last week, strongly urging an end to Japan's beef ban. In 2004, Baucus met with Japanese leaders in Japan and also brought them to visit a beef ranch in his home state of Montana. Current World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) guidelines ensure the safety of beef exports in cattle less than 30 months of age.

A number of U.S. trading partners continue to unfairly ban imports of U.S. beef. Those countries cite similarly unfounded BSE concerns. Baucus said today he will continue working to reopen those markets to U.S. producers.

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