

U.S. tariffs poised to target Spanish olives

Government agencies conclude unfair dumping on U.S. market

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The U.S. government is poised to impose tariffs on ripe olives from Spain after finding they've been dumped on the U.S. market and harmed domestic producers.

Last year, two federal agencies began an anti-dumping investigation into Spanish ripe table olives at the behest of two California companies, Bell-Carter Foods and Musco Family Olive Co.

The U.S. International Trade Commission has now concluded that imports of Spanish olives have "materially injured" domestic producers after the U.S. Com-



Capital Press File

The U.S. Department of Commerce has found that Spanish olives are being dumped on the U.S. market.

merce Department earlier found they're being dumped at less than fair value in the U.S.

Those two determinations mean that federal "countervailing and antidumping duty orders" can now be imposed.

According to the California

olive producers, the very existence of the domestic industry is being threatened by a flood of Spanish olives.

"U.S. domestic processors invented the ripe olive product but without relief from unfairly traded imports, the U.S. industry will disappear," they

said in a petition urging government action.

Over the past five years, the volume of Spanish ripe olives shipped to the U.S. has surged more than 50 percent, to 58,000 tons, at a price that's 40 percent lower than the domestic product, the petition said.

Bell-Carter and Musco said they're caught in a "Catch-22" situation because they can't remain competitive while raising consumer prices, but they also can't reduce prices to farmers without having them remove olive trees.

"This problem will only get worse; as subject imports continue to depress grower margins, U.S. growers will have no choice but to continue pulling acreage from olive production, thereby further reducing U.S. supply to domestic processors," according to the companies.

Acreage in California, where most olives are grown, has contracted by roughly one-

fourth since 2013 as farmers switch to higher-value crops like almonds, the petition said.

"Time is running out for the domestic ripe olive industry," according to Bell-Carter and Musco.

The U.S. Commerce Department has found that the Spanish government is providing subsidies to olive producers that amount to 7 to 27 percent of their value.

Such practices have allowed Spanish producers to sell their olives in the U.S. at 17 percent to 25 percent below fair market value, with total sales hitting \$67.6 million last year.

The U.S. Commerce Department notes that "enforcement of U.S. trade law is a prime focus of the Trump Administration," which has opened 118 anti-dumping investigations so far, an increase of nearly 60 percent compared to the same time during the Obama administration.

Report raps two Thurston Conservation District supervisors

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Two Western Washington farmers say they will defend themselves against claims that they have damaged the Thurston Conservation District's finances and reputation and should be removed from the district's board of supervisors.



Eric Johnson



Richard Mankamy

Eric Johnson and Richard Mankamy are accused in a report released Friday by State Conservation Commission staff of sowing dissension and violating district policies. The report recommends that state conservation commissioners pursue expelling them from the board.

"When we go to a public hearing, I think a lot of information will come out. I don't think it will change the outcome. There will be a removal of supervisors, but people will know how the money is spent," Johnson said.

The Thurston district has been embroiled in a long-running, multi-faceted dispute over its operations. The state commission started investigating supervisors in November in response to complaints by another supervisor, Samantha Fleischner, who was since left the board.

The wide-ranging report accused Johnson and Mankamy of "neglect of duty" and "malfeasance," while not finding grounds for accusing other past and present supervisors. The report noted tensions between staff and supervisors, but the state commission has authority to remove only supervisors.

Johnson and Mankamy are both accused of hindering the district from paying its bills on time and of misconduct toward staff members. In interviews with the Capital Press, they disputed the claims and attributed conflicts to challenging district staff to justify expenses.

"The more questions we ask, the more back we get," Mankamy said. "I want my day in court. I want an unbiased investigation."

Johnson and Mankamy have 30 days to reply in writing to the allegations. The commission will then decide whether to hold a hearing within 60 days.

The complaints include an episode in which Johnson allegedly dodged a meeting in November, causing the board to lack a quorum and miss a deadline to refile a budget with the county to continue collecting a parcel tax that brought in about \$600,000 a year.

Mankamy was "upfront" about not being able to participate in the meeting, but Johnson, "by all accounts," could have joined the meeting by phone from Yakima, where he was attending a dairy conference, according to the report.

Johnson said he supported continuing to collect the tax, but didn't have time for a meeting that day. The staff should have planned better to meet the deadline, he said.

Conservation Commission policy director Ron Shultz said the loss of revenue could jeopardize a plan to implement voluntary conservation measures on Thurston County farms.

No clue to why cougar killed Washington cyclist

Necropsy finds nothing unusual

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The cougar that killed a cyclist in Western Washington wasn't suffering any physical abnormality that might explain the rare attack, according to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The 104-pound, 3-year-old male was lean, but had an adequate amount of body fat and wasn't suffering from a virus, brain disease or poisoning, according to the department. Wildlife veterinarian Kristin Mansfield said explaining the animal's unusual behavior would be speculation.

"It's possible the person was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Cats hunt. It can happen. Thankfully, it's very rare," she said.

The cougar attacked Seattle residents Isaac Sederbaum, 31,

and S.J. Brooks, 32, on May 19 near North Bend east of Seattle in the Cascade foothills. Sederbaum was seriously injured, and Brooks was killed. Brooks was the first person killed by a cougar since 1924, according to Fish and Wildlife. Some 18 other people had survived cougar attacks.

The cougar tested negatively for viruses such as rabies and canine distemper, and the presence of toxic elements such as lead and mercury. An examination of the brain revealed no diseases or signs of chronic stress, according to a necropsy report and laboratory results.

Fish and Wildlife officers responding to the attack chased and shot a cougar, which died of two gunshot wounds.

Officers are confident that they shot the cougar that attacked the cyclists. The department is awaiting the results of DNA analysis for conformation. The results are expected with the next month, Mansfield said.



Rich Beausoleil/Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

A cougar stares down from a tree in Washington. State wildlife managers say a necropsy didn't find any abnormalities to explain why a cougar attacked two cyclists in May, killing one.

Japan re-opens to U.S. sheep and goat meat

Prohibition was imposed after 2003 BSE discovery

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Marketers plan to reintroduce U.S. lamb and goat meat

to Japanese consumers after an absence from that market of nearly 15 years.

Japan stopped accepting

meat from U.S. cattle and other ruminants, including sheep and goats, in late 2003 after the discovery of bovine spon-

giform encephalopathy — a neurological disease — in a Washington dairy cow.

The prohibition was recently lifted, allowing U.S. producers to compete with Australia and New Zealand in Japan, which last year imported \$169 million of sheep and goat meat from those countries.

"Even 10 to 15 percent of that market would be millions of dollars," said Peter Orwick, executive director of the American Sheep Industry Association.

Australia and New Zealand will likely remain the major exporters of sheep and goat meat to Japan but the market's re-opening will have an impact on the U.S. industry, particularly with "higher-end" cuts such as the rack of lamb, he said.

"This is like newfound customers for companies of ours that want to pursue it," Orwick said.

Even without the Japanese market, U.S. exporters of sheep and goat meat have made major strides over the

past decade and a half — shipments to other countries have more than doubled from \$7 million to \$15 million in that time, according to USDA.

Meanwhile, Japan's consumption of imported sheep and goat meat has also grown from less than \$90 million to nearly \$170 million a year.

The U.S. Meat Export Federation plans to conduct educational seminars for Japanese chefs and distributors to remind them of the unique texture and flavor of U.S. lamb, said Joe Schuele, its communications director.

Unlike sheep from Australia and New Zealand, which are generally grass fed, those from the U.S. are finished on a diet of grains that imparts juiciness to the meat, he said. Grain-finished beef is already popular in Japan.

"It's a concept that Japanese consumers are familiar with and which they've shown an appetite for," Schuele said.

Japan has specific requirements for meat imports that can be found on the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service website, but U.S. processors are familiar with those requirements and well-prepared to meet them, he said.

"I think everyone in the supply chain will benefit from it," Schuele said.

With Japan now re-opened to U.S. sheep and goat meat, hopefully trade negotiators can now focus on re-opening other markets to those products, including South Korea and countries in South America, he said.

Lifting the ban on U.S. beef in Japan was the top priority of USDA negotiators while the prohibition on sheep and goat meat probably took longer to unwind because it was tangled up with other trade issues, said Orwick.

"A lot of those trade issues don't have anything to do with your particular commodity," he said.

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