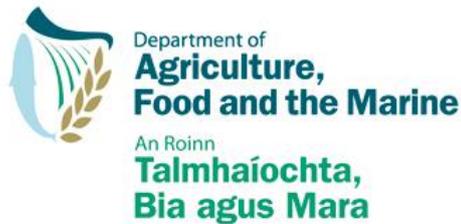


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1/15

5 January 2015

**COVENEY SECURES ACCESS FOR IRISH BEEF IN US –
IRELAND FIRST EU MEMBER STATE TO OBTAIN US APPROVAL**

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney TD today announced that Ireland has secured beef access to the valuable US market, becoming the first EU member state to achieve this. The news follows a successful inspection by the US authorities of Ireland's beef production systems in July of last year.

Commenting on the news, Minister Coveney said *"I am delighted with this confirmation that the US market is now open to Irish beef. This is the culmination of two years of intensive work between my Department and our US counterparts to prove our credentials as a supplier of highest quality premium beef. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my US counterpart Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack with whom I've worked very closely on this issue to bring it to this stage"*.

Beef from the EU has been banned from the US since it imposed its ban for BSE reasons over fifteen years ago and this ban was only formally lifted in March 2014. Ireland had been consistently calling for the US to lift its ban and Minister Coveney had raised the matter with Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack, citing the high demand for Irish beef around the world as proof of its quality and reliability. The Minister commented *"this announcement by the US is a huge endorsement of Irish beef and our production and regulatory systems. It complements the other market access outlets we have secured in the last two years all of which are a key element of our Food Harvest 2020 strategy to expand the overseas opportunity for Irish beef. It's clear that diversifying our international beef markets as an exporting country is key to the long-term sustainability of our beef sector"*.

This US decision clears the way for the Irish authorities to approve individual beef plants here to export to the US, approval for which will be based on agreed criteria with their US counterparts. The Department has been working with interested Irish plants to assess their readiness and suitability for export for some time and this work will intensify now in order that the trade can formally commence as soon as possible.

Concluding, the Minister said *“this US market is a huge prize given the size of the market and the demand we know exists there for premium grass-fed beef. We now have first-mover advantage as a result of being the first EU member state to gain entry. There is also the large Irish-American community which will be a key target of our promotional efforts for Irish beef now. My Department and Bord Bia have been planning for this announcement for some time now and will announce a number of initiatives in the coming weeks including a dedicated website aimed at American consumers and buyers highlighting the quality of Irish beef. This announcement marks a fantastic start to 2015 for the Irish beef sector”*.

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