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**For information contact:**

Molly Moore

[molly@sandersonstrategies.com](mailto:molly@sandersonstrategies.com)

202-682-3700 (office)

240-475-0590 (cell)

**UAE ENDS BAN ON U.S. BEEF IMPORTS**

**Action called “win-win” for both countries**

The United Arab Emirates has ended its restrictions on U.S. beef imports, providing a major boost for America’s food trade in the expanding Middle Eastern market, according to Michael Imgarten, president of United Source One, a leading exporter of U.S. prime beef to the region.

“The decision to lift these restrictions benefits both the U.S. economy and UAE consumers,” said Imgarten, who was active in U.S. efforts urging the UAE to lift the ban. “It is a win-win for both of our countries.”

U.S. consulate officials in Dubai informed food export industry officials of the decision on Sunday, Imgarten said. American authorities said they received a letter from UAE officials confirming a Jan. 24 decree lifting the import ban on U.S. beef products from cattle more than 30 months old. The UAE imposed the restrictions in 2009, six years after a reported U.S. incident in 2003 of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), known as mad cow disease. No cases of BSE have been reported in the United States since 2006.

Imgarten said the UAE action will aid exporters seeking to expand their U.S. businesses overseas as U.S. beef sales continue to suffer in the struggling domestic economy.

“This will be a boon to companies that specialize in food exports, providing more jobs in some of the U.S. communities hardest hit by unemployment,” said Imgarten, whose company is based in the rural northeastern Maryland town of Belcamp.

The UAE is one of the most important trade hubs in the region, adding to the significance of this potential market expansion, Imgarten said. When Egypt lifted a similar ban in 2010, U.S. beef exports to the country increased by 40 percent, he said.

While most beef in the United States is produced from cattle less than 30 months of age, the USDA documentation required to export beef to the UAE because of the country’s restrictions eliminated an estimated 80 percent of the available U.S. beef products from consideration, according to Imgarten.

“For the first time since early 2009, U.S. beef exporters can compete fairly with other countries such as Australia and Brazil which were not covered by the same restrictions,” Imgarten said.

The U.S. food export industry, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and Congress have been working with UAE officials to remove the ban. U.S. Sen. Max Baucus, (D-Montana), whose state is a major cattle producer, urged the UAE to drop the restrictions, calling them

“scientifically unjustified.” U.S. Rep. C.A. “Dutch” Ruppertsberger (D-Md.) wrote UAE officials that “the UAE restriction on U.S. beef is unnecessary, outdated and not in accord with WTO (World Trade Organization) rules.”

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