

I am a beef producer on the north coast of NSW producing yearlings direct to the butcher and veal. I offer my concerns regarding the relaxing of import restrictions on beef.

!- My understanding is that BSE can not be passed from infected beef to live cattle [ I guess the two don't come in contact] so it would appear that any risk from BSE is not to the cattle herd but to people eating the beef. We are being told that the risk of BSE infected beef coming in is very low so in theory the risk to public health is low as well. This is a judgement that some one else has to make and if they're wrong 1- people are infected and 2- the beef industry closes down over night [World Trade Organization obligation that all Australian beef be removed from the shelves]

2-Trade is very important to this country particularly the beef industry as we produce far more than we can consume and if we expect to be able to export to other countries then we can hardly stop those countries exporting to us. My concerns are twofold. 1- Countries like the USA will dump beef at low prices to attempt to establish a market competing directly with local producers who are struggling with very low prices for their product now. I cite the pork industry where imported subsidised pork has forced a large majority of local pork producers out of the industry. 2- The perception by the general public that there now may be a risk of contracting BSE from eating beef because you cant tell which country its from. Better to play safe and not buy beef at all. Beef sales collapse as a result. If the decision has been made that there is little risk to public health and please God there right I believe the imported product should be clearly labelled as such so the public can make that decision as to whether they are willing to take that risk. Also as stated earlier I don't believe we can stop imports but I believe that those imports must be subject to all assessment criteria to prevent risk to public health and also subject to restrictions put on us by countries we export to like full trace back (NLIS)

3-The risk to agriculture is more likely to come from the importation of live animals and my understanding is that cattle from BSE countries can not be imported. The risk of livelihood collapse due to the dumping of beef from other countries into Australia.

Mike Kena