



EUROPEAN UNION - Delegation to the State of Israel

האיחוד האירופי - המשלחת למדינת ישראל

الاتحاد الأوروبي - البعثة إلى دولة إسرائيل

Trade and Economic Section

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The Delegation as well as the Trade Counselors of Germany, Portugal, Greece, France, Italy, Lithuania, Spain, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Belgium, met today (3 May 2016) with the Head of the Imports Division at the Ministry of Economy & Industry Mr. Danny Tal, and his team. The purpose of the meeting was to present to the EU MS the interest of the Israeli government to enhance competition and reduce prices in exports of meat to Israel as a follow up to a first such meeting which took place in February.

Main points raised:

- **Mr. Tal** noted that Israel's annual imports of fresh and frozen meat amount to 135,000. More than half of imports is of frozen meat, probably as a result of the fact that there is no customs duty on imports of frozen meat, while the effective duty on imports of fresh meat is around 100%. The government normally allocates annual quotas of 3,000 tons for the fresh meat, but the allocation of 2016 was increased to around 9,000 tons, as part of the attempt to decrease prices and cost of living in Israel. The Ministry of Finance is considering a further increase of these quotas, as part of the government's effort to reform the agricultural market (following, to a large extent, the European model and the OECD requirements to replace customs duties with direct support to the farmers). The Ministry of Economy & Industry also instructed Israel's Commercial Counselors abroad to actively look for potential meat exporters to Israel.
- As agreed with the EU side, the Ministry, jointly with the EU Delegation and the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce, will hold a one-day match-making meeting in mid-November 2016, with the participation of the Israeli Veterinary Services, the Chief Rabbinate (in charge on kosher requirements), MS Commercial Counsellors with respective new potential exporters from MS, and potential Israeli importers. The participation of EU veterinary authorities was clearly encouraged by the Israeli side.
- In the first part of the planned meeting, the European participants will receive first-hand information concerning veterinary and Kosher requirements on imports to Israel. In the second part, B2B

meetings between potential exporters and importers will be conducted.

- The Israeli Veterinary Services already agreed that when a new slaughterhouse in the EU is approved for exporting to Israel, the approval of further slaughterhouses will be delegated to the veterinary authorities of this country. This will save time and reduce costs. Moreover, initial talks on the high cost of Kosher requirements were held between the Ministry and the Chief Rabbinate, and the latter expressed willingness to look into certifying Rabbis in Europe to perform kosher slaughtering, which will be recognized in Israel. This will take time, but these are important and encouraging news.
- Mr. Tal asked MS to provide names of potential exporters, in order that Israel's Commercial Counsellors in Europe will be able to approach them. Also, if there is an interest from the European side, the Ministry could connect the European companies which will arrive to Israel in November with Israeli companies specializing on agricultural technology.
- Most EU MS present expressed interest in the Ministry's initiative and received clarifications to their questions.

Summing up, both parties found the meeting very productive. The Ministry will send the Delegation the proposal for the exact date of the November meeting within two weeks, and the Delegation will forward it to the MS.

As for the possible change in the Chief Rabbinate's position, this is something we have been suggesting for years, so the proposal, when applied, goes hand in hand with this old offensive EU point.