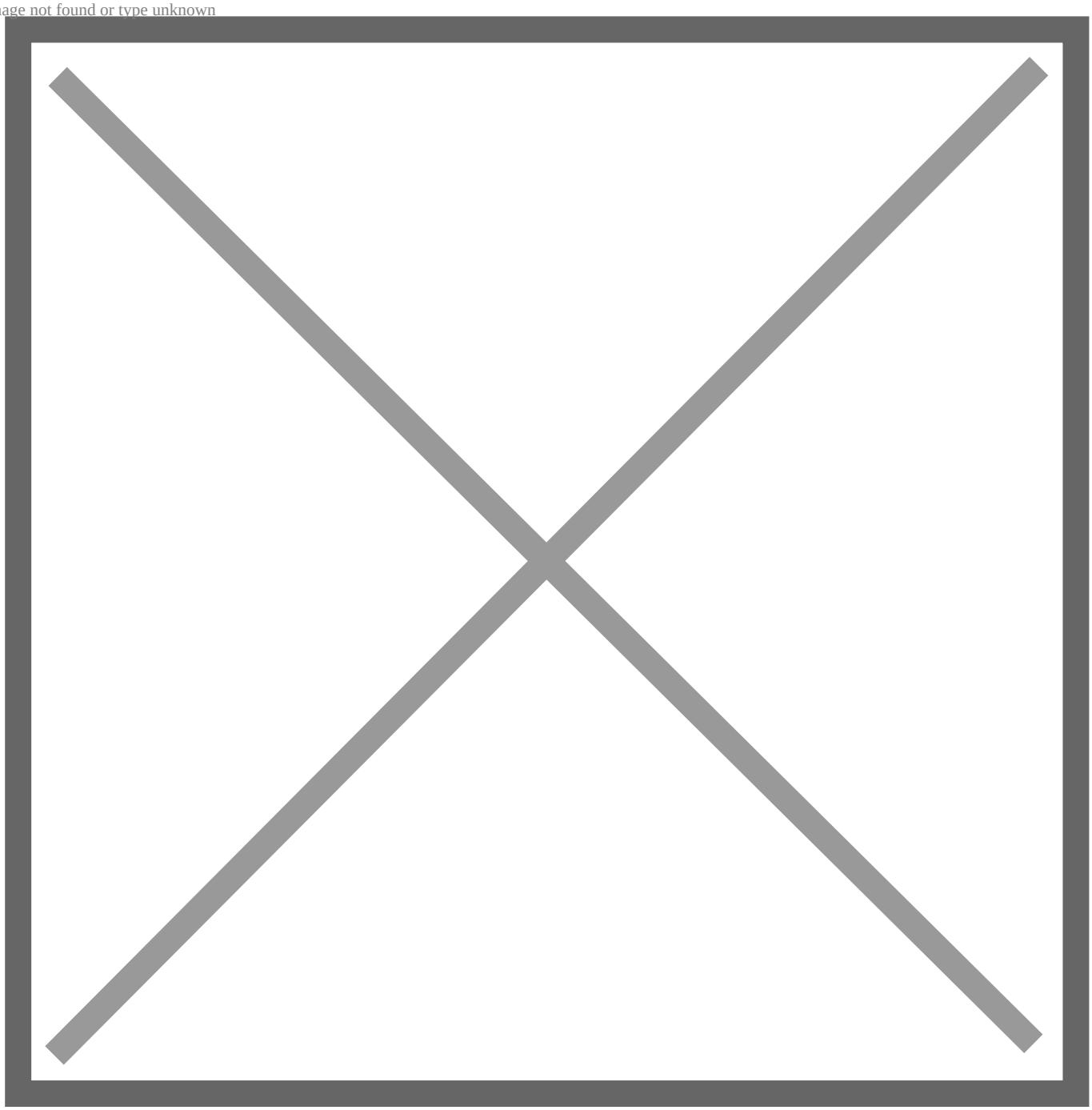
How to Export Meat Products to China

TAGS Food & Beverage Meat

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China is one of the most attractive markets for European meat exporters. Over the past 15 years, more than 200 establishments from 13 EU countries have obtained approvals to sell their products in the Chinese market and the EU market share in China has been growing steadily.

However, managing the meat importing process and conforming to a multitude of regulations in China remains a major challenge for many European meat exporters. It is important to have a thorough understanding of the complete process, know where to find reliable information and conduct proper due diligence before engaging with a Chinese partner.

Challenges and Opportunities

China's selective imports of meat products are based upon the principle of bilateral agreements negotiation with each country (known as Protocols).

Exporters in the EU cannot benefit from a common trade policy. They are kept in competition with all registered companies from countries that have signed agreements with China. The major challenges faced by European meat exporters include:

- The scattering of responsibilities among different government levels and administrative overlapping in China generate inconsistencies in the interpretation of laws and regulations, further influenced by factors such as location, personal relationships or political issues;
- Inspection criteria and verification procedures are not sufficiently transparent, which leaves space for arbitrary discrimination and generates confusion and uncertainty among foreign food exporters;
- Standard duplicities and legal gaps cause confusion and inconsistencies among law enforcement personnel;
- Approval procedures can be expensive and time-consuming.

However, over the past few years EU governments have been working with local meat associations in negotiating new protocols and making the most of existing agreements to give European companies access to the growing markets in China. In particular, the new markets that are most promising for European exporters include:

- Meat in growing demand such as **beef and lamb**;
- Meat products with higher export value: from **carcasses and basic assortment** (e.g. head, trotters, tail, kidney, rinds, liver) to **premium cuts** (e.g. frozen pre-packaged bone in loins, picnic roasts, belly slices, etc.) and **organic meat**;
- Processed products such as **cured and cooked ham and sausages**.

Once the agreements are fully implemented more European SMEs may gain access to the Chinese market.

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Advice for European Exporters

1. Find out if your country has signed Protocols with China

If you are interested in exporting meat products to China, you shall first find out if your country has signed a Protocol with China.

Protocols are bilateral agreements between the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of China (AQSIQ) and corresponding food safety departments in the

exporting countries that set up veterinary and health requirements for meat products to be exported to China.

Protocols transfer the responsibility for inspection and quarantine on the meat products to be exported to the authorities in the exporting country. An export health certificate ensures compliance with these requirements.

In the EU SME Centre's guideline on exporting meat products to China, you will find a list of EU countries that have signed Protocols with China. You could also find the link to an interactive map that shows all products included in protocols signed by each single EU country with China and the number of establishments registered as of May 2015.

2. Obtaining an establishment approval

Establishment approval is a prerequisite to identify foreign firms eligible to sell meat products to China, as a way to ensure a desired level of food safety in addition to inspection and quarantine procedures for import clearance.

Foreign meat producers must be registered with AQSIQ on an intergovernmental level. The registration is administered by the Certification and Accreditation Administration of China (CNCA).

If you are interested in learning more on exporting meat products to China, click here to download the Centre's guideline for more detailed information. It covers all the essential aspects you need to know for your exporting business, which include:

- The latest market overview;
- The regulatory framework for meat products in China;
- A list of EU countries that have signed Protocols with China;
- Requirements for exporters and Chinese importers and approval procedure;
- Timeframes and costs of import procedures after arrival at Chinese port;
- An overview of the main laws and regulations concerned with meat imports;
- Main challenges for European SMEs and tips on how to overcome them.

If you have any questions regarding exporting meat products to China, do not hesitate to contact our experts here.

Looking for more information? Find them in our guideline Exporting Meat Products to China.