I appreciate the opportunity to represent the National Pork Producers Council at today’s hearing. NPPC is a national association representing 42 state producer organizations. It represents the federal policy and global interests of 60,000 U.S. pork producers.

The United States is the top global exporter of pork, shipping nearly 2.5 million metric tons (MT), valued at over $6.4 billion to more than 100 nations in 2018. While Thailand consumes more than one million metric tons of pork annually, it imported no U.S. pork in 2018. That’s because Thailand effectively maintains a ban on U.S. pork. It defends its unwarranted ban on uncooked pork and other pork products by pointing to the use of ractopamine by some U.S. pork producers.

Ractopamine hydrochloride (or ractopamine) is a feed ingredient approved for use in the United States for swine and beef cattle. In swine, it is used for increased weight gain, feed efficiency, and carcass leanness in finishing swine.

Thailand maintains a ban on imports of pork produced with ractopamine, despite the approval by its own Ministry of Health for domestic use. After an extensive risk assessment, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved ractopamine for use in hogs in 1999, and no adverse human health problems have been reported since approval. In 2012, the Codex Alimentarius recognized the safety of ractopamine, establishing a recommended maximum residue level (MRL) for the product. At least 25 other countries have also approved the use of ractopamine in pork production, and an additional 75 countries permit imports of pork produced using ractopamine.

Both the United States government and the private sector have had discussions dating back to 2010 requesting a Thai government risk assessment for ractopamine. After ten years of discussions, Thailand continues to maintain its ractopamine ban. The country’s promises to take action allowing imports of pork produced with ractopamine were very clearly a delaying tactic. It is equally clear that the Thai government has no intention of adopting Codex-consistent Maximum Residue Limits anytime in the foreseeable future.

Thailand’s ban on U.S. pork is even more inexplicable when you consider it accepts pork from other international suppliers, including the European Union, Brazil and South Korea. It has erected other trade barriers, such as its refusal to grant import licenses for U.S. pork. The Thai government has never provided a rationale for the arbitrary refusals of import permits.

This is astonishing especially when you consider that U.S. pork producers provide 26 billion pounds of safe, wholesome and nutritious meat protein to consumers worldwide. We urge USTR to press Thailand to remove all non-tariff barriers to trade and they accept pork from all USDA approved facilities.

Based on the long-standing restrictions on U.S. pork described here, NPPC respectfully requests that action be taken to withdraw or significantly reduce Thailand’s eligibility for GSP benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. I look forward to answering your questions.