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**Prepared By:** ATO Hong Kong Staff

**Approved By:** Jennifer Clever

**Report Highlights:**

Bite size local news, Post reports and activity summaries wrapped by ATO Hong Kong. In this issue: Triumphant Return of The Great American Texas BBQ; Hong Kong Exports Likely to Face Significant Challenges; Call to Develop In-depth Tourism; Hong Kong's Traditional Street-Eateries Fight to Stay Open; Hong Kong Scores Top MICE Show; Macau's October Hotel Occupancy at 83 Percent; Payments at Retail Made Easier for Travelers Between Hong Kong and Thailand; Major Hong Kong Retailers Promote Sustainability; Hong Kong October Retail Sales Up; Welcome Marketing Specialist Crystal Tang; Hong Kong Reports Second Case of African Swine Fever in a Month; Japanese Seafood Back in Flavor; Hong Kong Suspends Imports of Poultry and Products from Sixteen U.S. Counties.

## ATO Hong Kong, The U.S. Meat Export Federation, and The Texas Beef Council Go Big In The Triumphant Return of “The Great American Texas BBQ”



On November 21, 2023, ATO Hong Kong, the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), and the Texas Beef Council, accompanied by U.S. Consul General, Greg May, co-hosted the much anticipated return of the “The Great American Texas BBQ 2023.” Over 800 guests (primarily chefs and buyers) attended the event which lined up 21 F&B stations to showcase an array of U.S. foods including premium U.S. meat, sausages, artisan cheeses, U.S. wines and spirits.



During the first nine months of 2023, U.S. exports of beef to Hong Kong continue to recover - growing 3.6 percent to \$304.6 million. Conversely, U.S. exports of pork to Hong Kong dropped 16.6 percent to \$20.6 million. Despite a declining export trend in recent years, Hong Kong is the seventh largest export destination for U.S. beef products and an excellent market for U.S. premium cuts.



Make sure to check event highlights on [our LinkedIn page](#).

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## ECONOMY

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### **Hong Kong's Paul Chan Says Exports Likely to Face Significant Hurdles in 2024, While Perks of Investment Trawl May Take Time to Appear** [[SCMP](#), Nov. 26]

Hong Kong exports are likely to continue facing “significant challenges” next year as the effects of government efforts to attract investors may take time to become apparent. Looking ahead, the main drivers of economy in 2024 will be the export of tourism services and consumption. Authorities earlier this month adjusted the city’s growth forecast for 2023 from 4-5 percent to 3.2 percent. Chan said authorities had downgraded the yearly forecast largely due to challenges in terms of exports. Hong Kong had seen a recovery in terms of consumption and tourism, with the number of tourists visiting the city reaching about 60 percent of pre-pandemic levels. In October, exports from mainland China fell more than expected as shipments to major trading partners remained weak, marking six straight months of decline. Exports that month dropped 6.4 percent from a year earlier to \$274.8 billion. **ATO Notes:** A quick overview on Hong Kong’s economic sectors: in the third quarter GDP increased 4.1 percent, total retail sales from all types of outlets increased 5.6 percent and total import and export increased 2.6 percent and 1.4 percent respectively year-on-year. Conversely, supermarket receipts dropped 9.6 percent. Almost all food categories have decreased in sales except for alcohol drinks, which increased 182 percent.

### **Call to Develop In-depth Tourism to Counter Fall-off in Mainlanders' Luxury Spending** [[The Standard](#), Dec. 5]

In-depth tourism should be developed in the city because mainland tourists are no longer eager to buy luxury products, says Dane Cheng Ting-yat, executive director of the Hong Kong Tourism Board. Cheng said tourists revisiting Hong Kong can be seen to have changed their tastes with the border reopening. "They are no longer keen on buying luxury products, which led to a decline in retail business," he said, "but the government could stimulate consumption in tourists' experience of Hong Kong's culture and art." Timothy Chui Ting-pong, executive director of the Hong Kong Tourism Association said Hong Kong’s tourism sector should explore new opportunities in tours rather than to keep focusing on shopping. He too noted that shopping is no longer an attraction for visitors as other cities such as Shenzhen, Seoul and Tokyo can offer visitors preferable prices and a better shopping experience than Hong Kong. **ATO Notes:** Tourists from mainland are less interested in purchasing luxury products in Hong Kong. However, October sales for clothing and jewelry improved 25 and 27 percent, respectively, and drove the overall growth in Hong Kong retail.

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## **Hongkongers who Ditch City to Spend in Mainland is Minimal, Says John Lee [[The Standard](#), Nov. 29]**

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said that Hongkongers who ditch the city to spend in the mainland only account for a small percentage of the total population, and that private sector should follow the government's lead in attracting local consumption. His comments came as a record high of nearly 5.4 million Hongkongers traveled to the mainland last month, with an estimated spending of around \$462 million, leaving industries worried about their businesses in the upcoming Christmas and New Year holidays. Speaking on a radio program this morning, Lee said although some 200,000 people travel to the mainland every weekend for leisure - accounting for about 3 percent of Hong Kong's population, people should not view this as "exporting consumption" and instead, efforts should be focused on attracting local residents to spend locally. **ATO Notes:** The recorded 5.4 million travelers to mainland includes the cross-border workers and students, and 200,000 are Hongkonger that reside in Hong Kong and travel across to spend. However, the 3 percent referenced in the article are presumably locals that have spending power, which choose to spend in nearby mainland cities that offers better prices and services.

## **Districts Under Revitalization to See More Events During Christmas [[Macau Daily Times](#), Nov. 29]**

With the revitalization projects well-received, additional efforts will be made for Christmas, according to director of the Cultural Affairs Bureau Leong Wai Man. She highlighted the discussion on the reception of revitalization projects and flow-on effects to the Christmas period at the post-meeting press conference. She hoped cultural resources rooted in the neighborhoods could be better utilized to increase the vitality of the areas. She said that during the Macau Grand Prix weekends, the Mount Fortress had seen over 14,000 visitors. Meanwhile, Rua de Felicidade saw nearly 60,000 visitors over the same weekends. She saw these figures as proof that the projects were successful. **ATO Notes:** The government has been promoting the diversification of its sectors, part of that plan includes the involvement of the casino operators in managing revitalization projects in traditional districts.

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## ***HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS***

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## **Hong Kong's Traditional Dai Pai Dong Street-food Stalls Fight to Stay Open [[SCMP](#), Nov. 27]**

Many of the city's streetside hawker stands have closed over the years, but others have adapted to the times. This episode of Hong Kong Authentic explores the history behind the famed food stalls and the families that run them. Distinct, delectable, but disappearing: streetside hawker stands in Hong Kong known as "dai pai dongs" and the classic comfort food they serve are an iconic part of the city's history, offering up a striking contrast to the modern polished skyscrapers that throng the city skyline. From the classic food stands to cooked food centers to mushroom pavilions nestled in public housing estates

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known as dung gu ting. To watch, please visit <https://www.scmp.com/video/hong-kong/3239389/how-lion-rock-became-ever-changing-symbol-hong-kong-identity?module=inline&pgtype=article>. **ATO**

**Notes:** This video documents the development of Hong Kong restaurants past and present. It gives a good reference on consumer expectations and how the city's changing demography and geo-politics are influencing restaurant operations.

## **‘Starting from Zero’: Hong Kong Restaurants Begin Revamping E-menus, Tech Measures that Leave Disabled Diners Out in the Cold Amid Watchdog Call [SCMP, Nov. 27]**

While visually impaired Keny Yuen can navigate Hong Kong's chaotic streets on his own, eating out has proven more difficult as restaurants have gone increasingly digital. Some restaurants have digital menus he can “listen to” by using his phone's screen-reading function. However, that does not work if the menus have mostly pictures and no text. Hong Kong's Equal Opportunities Commission has said it wants more done and has urged the catering industry to do more to help the disabled “dine with dignity.” At a seminar, the equality watchdog held on Wednesday last week, experts and industry players discussed ways to ensure that the technology used in catering services was accessible to all. In late October, it recommended more than 80 best practices for restaurants, including installing ramps and automatic doors, widening passageways, and providing accessible washrooms. Some of Hong Kong's major restaurant groups said they were already trying various ways to make their premises more welcoming to everyone. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong is not a city that can easily implement new measures to accommodate all customers given space limitations and costs. One will easily find aiding tools in public transportation and public spaces because these were government funded. This is not the case in privately-owned locations. In a report by a government census, the number of disabled persons constitutes 7.1 percent of the total population, and amongst them, 244,000 persons report mobility limitations. As restaurants have been struggling to survive over the last couple of years, grappling with labor shortages, fleeing customers, and high food prices, it is hard to tell whether establishments will move to utilize limited resources to improve accommodations for all customers.

## **‘Time Travel’ Tourism in Hong Kong – Could It Be the Boost the City Needs to Attract More International Visitors? [SCMP, Nov. 25]**

A futuristic ‘Time Travel Hub’ using cutting-edge tech like Virtual Reality and holograms could transport participants to significant periods in Hong Kong's rich history. Wan Chai, known for its vibrant nightlife, has always been a hub of activity, particularly for sailors who frequented the area for relaxation and amusement during their shore leave when Hong Kong was a bustling port for Britain and the United States. Over the years, Luk Kwok has undergone multiple renovations and expansions to cater to the evolving demands of its visitors. However, despite these changes, the hotel has retained its historic charm. The celebration has sparked an inspiring idea to introduce “time travel” as a unique tourism concept in Hong Kong to entice international visitors. By combining history, technology and entertainment, the time travel concept has the potential to rejuvenate Hong Kong's tourism industry by attracting a diverse range of international visitors seeking unique and immersive experiences. **ATO Notes:** As mentioned, the Hong Kong government is looking for ways to attract more visitors to Hong Kong leveraging the city's strengths such as technology and unique history. Located in the middle of Hong Kong's city center, Wanchai used to be a location with a vibrant night life. Major events are scheduled to take place in this location in the coming year.

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## **Hong Kong Scores Top MICE Show [[The Standard](#), Dec. 1]**

Hong Kong will hold a flagship trade show for the meetings and events industry for the first time in the spring of 2025, the Tourism Board announced, saying it aims to attract more than 1,500 Asian travel and exhibition professionals. The IBTM Asia Pacific 2025 – is the world's leading meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions trade show. More than 1,500 travel trade and MICE professionals are expected from the mainland, southeast Asia, India, Japan, South Korea, and other Asia-Pacific markets, as well as exhibitors from long-haul markets. The board said the event can help enhance Hong Kong's position as "the world's meeting place" and facilitate the development of MICE tourism in the Asia-Pacific region. **ATO Notes:** IBTM is a world-leading showcase for the meetings and events industry with a portfolio of events and products offerings across four continents. The portfolio includes IBTM World, IBTM Americas, IBTM Asia Pacific and IBTM Africa. Serving as host of the next IBTM Hong Kong hopes to present itself as still the ideal platform to host larger events and exchanges in the region.

## **Macau's October Hotel Occupancy at 83 Percent [[Macau Daily Times](#), Nov. 29]**

The average occupancy rate of guest rooms rose 41.1 percentage points year-on-year to 82.8 percent in October, amid the National Day Golden Week, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has shown. The occupancy rates for 5-star (85.6 percent) and 2-star hotels (83.1 percent) both exceeded 80 percent, surging 45.4 percentage points and 33.7 percentage points, respectively. In October, the number of hotel guests leaped 151.8 percent year-on-year to 1,247,000. Guests from mainland China grew 131.2 percent to 904,000; guests from Hong Kong jumped 787 percent to 187,000 and guests from Taiwan grew 503.1 percent to 28,000. The Golden Week of the National Day holidays, which followed the Mid-Autumn Festival holiday, accounted for a higher number of visitors to Macau than initially forecasted. The eight-day holiday period reported 931,429 visitors, a 16.4 percent increase over the Government's Tourism Office (MGTO) expectations, with a daily average of 116,429. **ATO Notes:** The total number of visitors traveling to Macau in October added up to 2.7 million, among them, visitors arriving on package tours totaled 914,000.

## **MICE Sector Shows Signs of Recovery as Revenues Surge [[Macau Daily Times](#), Nov. 28]**

In the third quarter of 2023, exhibition receipts grew 279 percent to \$4.9 million and exhibition expenditures grew 155.5 percent to \$12.5 million year-on-year. Data from the Statistics and Census Service shows that there were 221 meetings and conferences held during this time period, up 262.3 percent year-on-year; the number of participants soared 633.1 percent to 48,000. Exhibitions in the third quarter attracted 2,549 exhibitors and 21,000 professional visitors. In the first three quarters of 2023, a total of 757 MICE events were held, up 187.8 percent year-on-year; and the total number of participants and attendees rose 50.3 percent to 1,220,000. The two indicators recovered 70.4 percent and 96.1 percent compared to the same period of 2019. Meetings and conferences surged 221 percent to 703.

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## RETAIL

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### **Payments Made Easier for Travelers Between Hong Kong and Thailand [[The Standard](#), Dec. 5]**

The cross-border QR payment between Hong Kong's Fast Payment System (FPS) and Thailand's PromptPay was launched yesterday, providing a fast, secure and easily accessible cross-border retail payment service for people traveling between Hong Kong and Thailand. Announcing the initiative with the Bank of Thailand, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority said this payment connectivity will provide travelers with greater convenience, hence supporting tourism and economic activities between two areas. The service will allow Hongkongers visiting Thailand to make payments with the FPS, while Thai tourists in Hong Kong can use PromptPay at merchants accepting the FPS, by simply scanning the QR codes displayed by merchants with their mobile payment applications. **ATO Notes:** With this service, users can use additional payment methods while merchants can immediately receive and complete the transaction with their customers. This is a meaningful collaboration with Thailand in technology and finance. This linkage is expected to benefit 1.5 million tourists from these two economies.

### **PARKnSHOP Promotes Sustainable Development by Launching the First WWF FOR THE FUTURE Green Living Product Collection [[The Standard](#), Nov. 24]**

AS Watson Group and PARKnSHOP are dedicated to fostering a more sustainable future by giving back to the global community, driven by a passion for sustainability. The three main areas of social responsibility these groups are actively pursuing are ecology, human well-being, and high-quality products. They are dedicated to reducing the environmental impact of their businesses. To help customers take joint responsibility for protecting the planet's resources, PARKnSHOP has been aggressively putting environmental protection measures in place to lessen its impact on climate change, prevent deforestation, and reduce plastic waste. PARKnSHOP is introducing the new "WWF FOR THE FUTURE Green Living Collection" e-stamp redemption program for the first time in the Asian market to improve further public awareness and encourage participation in a harmonious and sustainable lifestyle. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong consumers increasingly value sustainable development and consumption. Businesses in Hong Kong are incorporating these ideals into their business offerings to attract Hongkongers.

### **TDC Adds to Christmas Chill with Bazaar [[The Standard](#), Nov. 29]**

Locals and tourists alike can visit a new food and entertainment event organized by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council during the Christmas holiday period at Asia World-Expo. "Chill 11," slated for December 23 to 26, will combine arts and culture, culinary delights and entertainment experiences, as well as brands and products, creating an extraordinary retail entertainment experience for Hong Kong and Macau residents, as well as visitors from Greater Bay Area. Through Chill 11, small and medium-sized local brands can present cultural and creative products to the Greater Bay Area market, it will further facilitate exchanges between Hong Kong and Macau, and other cities in the GBA. **ATO Notes:**

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This is another program hosted by Hong Kong Trade and Development Council to enhance Hong Kong’s attractiveness to local and regional visitors. Although the program is mostly featuring local brands, it is expected to boost consumption and stimulate retail economy in the region.

## **Hong Kong October Retail Sales Up 5.6 Percent, Helped by Inbound Tourism** [[The Standard, Dec. 1](#)]

The continued revival of inbound tourism helped Hong Kong's retail sales increase for an 11th consecutive month in October, though it was the slowest pace since December last year when it grew 1.2 percent, according to official data. Sales increased 5.6 percent year-on-year to \$4.33 billion in October, compared to 13 percent growth in September and 13.7 percent rise in August. **ATO Notes:** For the first 10 months of 2023, the value of retail sales rose 17.2 percent year-on-year.

## **All 315 Hotpot Food Samples Pass the Food Safety Watchdog's Quality Check** [[The Standard, Dec. 4](#)]

The Center for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced that the test results of 315 hotpot food samples collected under a food surveillance project were satisfactory. Different kinds of hotpot food samples were collected, including meat and seafood products, soup bases, beverages, sauces, and the like, from restaurants, fresh provision shops, supermarkets, grocery stores, market stalls, and retailers to test for coloring matters, preservatives, metallic contamination, and bacteria such as Salmonella. **ATO Notes:** The Hong Kong government conducts different food surveillance programs throughout the year to ensure food safety. CFS chose hotpot food in different restaurants for sampling, as hotpot food is popular during the wintertime. Raw food like meat, vegetables, and seafoods are typically offered, customers gather around a table with a boiling pot of soup and cook the raw ingredients themselves.



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## TRADE

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**Welcome Crystal Tang – Marketing Specialist:** FAS Hong Kong and FAS Guangzhou are pleased to announce the transfer of Yingting “Crystal” Tang, Marketing Specialist, to the Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) in Hong Kong. Crystal has been working for the U.S. Government for nineteen years, serving most recently as a valued member of the ATO/Guangzhou team covering key products (i.e., ginseng) and food processing. On December 4, 2023, Crystal joined ATO Hong Kong as Team Lead for Trade Shows, In-store Promotions, Trade Missions, SRTGs and Local Trader Relations. She holds an MBA from Hong Kong University of Science and

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Technology and B.S. degrees (e.g., Business Economics, Marketing) from University of Hertfordshire, U.K. She looks forward to expanding demand for U.S. agricultural products in Hong Kong.

## **Hong Kong to Cull 1,900 Pigs After Reporting Second Swine Fever Case in a Month [[The Standard](#), Nov. 24]**

Hong Kong has ordered the culling of almost two thousand pigs after confirming a second case of African swine fever (ASF) in a month. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) on Thursday said it planned to cull around 1,900 pigs from one herd on November 25 after the virus was discovered at a local pig farm. The licensed pig farm at Lau Fau Shan, in the rural Yuen Long area near the border with mainland China, tested positive for the ASF virus after staff took samples from 62 pigs. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong has very limited agricultural production and about 15 percent of live pig are locally raised. Most of Hong Kong's live pigs (for slaughter) are supplied by mainland China given the ease of inland transportation.

## **Customs Seizes Over 450 Kilograms of Dried Shark Fins at Airport [[The Standard](#), Nov. 27]**

Customs announced that they seized over 450 kg of dried shark fins, including suspected dried shark fins from endangered species, with an estimated market value of about \$166,667. The Agriculture, Fisheries, and Conservation Department (AFCD) confirmed that some of the dried shark fins are from endangered species not allowed for import into Hong Kong. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong controls the importation of fins from endangered species. In recent years, Hong Kong has increased awareness on food sustainability which has decreased the interest in shark fin consumption. Some restaurants still offer shark fins as signs of prestige and value in their dishes; the preference for them is dropping especially in younger generations.

## **Japanese Seafood Back in Flavor [[The Standard](#), Dec. 1]**

Imports of aquatic products from Japan surged 20 percent three months after Japan started discharging treated nuclear wastewater into the ocean as Hongkongers, according to restaurant owners, could not care less now. The government banned such imports from 10 Japanese prefectures in August. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said 1,700 batches of seafood were imported from Japan in October, up from 1,417 batches a year ago. As of November 20, the month has already seen 1,087 batches of seafood imported to the city and these are still rising. **ATO Notes:** The city is still controlling imports from 10 Japanese prefectures - which is still expected to temper growth in Japanese seafood imports until the regulation is abolished. Japan is the second largest seafood supplier to Hong Kong after China, providing \$482 million worth of seafood to the city in 2022. In the first 10 months of 2023, imports have already increased 6 percent totaling \$399 million. The United States is the tenth largest seafood supplier to the city, with imports growing 11 percent thus far this year to \$65 million. Imports of live eels, mollusks, oysters, and sea cucumbers have grown significantly in 2023.

## **Hong Kong Suspends Imports of Poultry Meat and Products from 16 Counties in the United States [[HKSAR - Press Release](#), Dec. 5]**

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department that in view of a notification from the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza (AI), it has suspended imports from Trempealeau County and Douglas County, State of Wisconsin; Sonoma County, State of California; Carroll County, State of Arkansas;

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Otter Tail County, Brown County, Big Stone County and Swift County, State of Minnesota; Sumter County, State of Georgia; Yankton County, Brule County and Kingsbury County, State of South Dakota; Dickey County, State of North Dakota; Sioux County, State of Iowa; Caroline County, State of Maryland; and Union County, State of Ohio. **ATO Notes:** As of this report, a total of 50 U.S. counties in thirteen states are currently banned from exporting poultry meat and products to Hong Kong due to AI. However, the reinstatement of imports from various other U.S. counties have spurred the value of U.S. poultry exports to the city to recover significantly, reaching \$78 million in the first ten months of 2023 and already exceeding the total value of exports in 2022. Conversely, the situation for U.S. eggs exports has not improved, during the same period, U.S. egg exports declined 60 percent compared to last year. Importers who turned to other suppliers as a result of higher U.S. prices last year have not returned to procure U.S. eggs despite improvements in price.

## **Hong Kong Suspends Imports of Poultry Meat and Products from Province of Gelderland in Netherlands, Areas in Belgium and Germany and Kagoshima Prefecture in Japan [[HKSAR - Press Release, Dec. 4](#); [HKSAR - Press Release, Dec. 5](#); [HKSAR - Press Release, Dec. 6](#)]**

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced that in view of a notification from the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza, it has suspended imports from West-Vlaanderen Province in Belgium and the District of Ostprignitz-Ruppin of the State of Brandenburg in Germany, Kagoshima Prefecture in Japan and Province of Gelderland in the Netherlands. **ATO Notes:** The affected countries mentioned in this story are not top suppliers to Hong Kong. Last year, Hong Kong's global imports of poultry meat were \$935 million while global imports of eggs and egg products were \$302 million. During the first ten months of 2023, global of imports of these products have increased.

Hungry for more information about the Hong Kong and Macau markets?

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## **Attachments:**

No Attachments.