

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Voluntary Public

Date: 4/26/2013

GAIN Report Number: BU1320

Bulgaria

Post: Sofia

U.S. Beef Promotion in Sofia

Report Categories:

CSSF Activity Report

Export Accomplishments - Events

Market Development Reports

Market Promotion/Competition

Approved By:

Michael Henney, Agricultural Attaché

Prepared By:

Alexander Todorov, Ag Marketing Assistant

Report Highlights:

On April 19 FAS Sofia, in cooperation with the Bulgarian Association of Professional Chefs ([BAPC](#)), organized a culinary demonstration at the International Fair in Plovdiv. The event was part of the [Bulgarian National Culinary Cup 2013](#). The hosts, two of the most popular chefs in Bulgaria - Chef Ivan Manchev and Chef Uti Bachvarov, performed an unforgettable culinary demonstration using American products available on the Bulgarian market, such as fine American beef and whiskey. U.S. Agricultural Attaché Michael Henney joined the distinguished chefs in preparing traditional American dishes and in presenting interesting facts about American cuisine and cooking culture to the audience.

General Information:

1. General Information:

Activity Name: **American Culinary Demonstration. Promotion of U.S. Beef, Whiskey, and Nuts.**

Beginning/Ending dates: **April 19, 2013.**

City/Country: **International Fair in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.**

2. Justification and purpose:

- FAS Sofia organized the event in partnership with the Bulgarian Association of Professional Chefs (BAPC). The products for the event were provided by the association. Despite the lack of promotional resources, FAS Sofia seized the opportunity to organize this big promotional activity at no cost.
- The event was part of the sixth edition of the National Culinary Cup Bulgaria 2013, and was supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Science.
- U.S. prime beef for direct consumption at high-end food service outlets has been imported to Bulgaria since 2005. The EU accession did not stop this trade but modified it so that the importers are currently buying not directly from the U.S. but through EU distributors.
- The beef enjoys an increasing popularity at high-end restaurants in the country and expands its market presence due to the growth of the food service sector. Despite current economic challenges, this trade continues to grow.
- In 2012 the beef market enjoyed steady growth in size, (more than 30 percent growth compared to 2011, according to the industry). The beef is considered as high-end product for Bulgaria.
- Special interest to this product has been expressed by the BAPC, Association of Restaurants and culinary clubs who are willing to partner with FAS Sofia for future promotional activities along with importers. Post is actively working with USMEF as well for the promotion of U.S. beef.
- On August 1, 2012, the zero-duty quota for High Quality Beef (HQB) was increased from 20,000 MT to 48,200 MT. The United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Uruguay are eligible to export beef to the EU within the HQB quota. The HQB quota is allocated in four equal parts during the quota year (QY) (July1-June 30), or 12,050 MT per quarter.
- Total EU imports of HQB in the QY 2012/13 are projected at 32,000 MT, of which 18,095 MT will originate from the United States (up 30 percent in comparison to the QY 2011/12).
- FAS Sofia, through this active promotional campaign targeted new lifestyles of the high-end customers by educating and increasing the awareness about the quality of U.S. beef among the

professional chefs and restaurant owners.

- Chef Ivan Manchev and Chef Uti Bachvarov are much respected opinion leaders in the culinary and restaurant business, which helped deliver the message about the quality and diversity of U.S. products to a broader audience.
- Chef Manchev is founder and Deputy Chair of the Bulgarian Association of Professional Chefs (BAPC). The association emphasizes on the quality of professional culinary education and support for young people. In addition, he is an owner of small but highly reputable restaurant chain, and a consultant for the popular TV show “[Cherry on the Cake](#)”.
- In 1996 Chef Uti Bachvarov started the first of its kind culinary show “Quick, Easy, Tasty” on the Bulgarian National TV. The show is still broadcasted during prime time at 6:30 p.m. every week day. Without question he is the most emblematic culinary showman, a highly respected opinion leader, and an audience favorite master of ceremony for culinary events.

The purpose of the event was to increase the HRI sector awareness of the high quality beef currently available on the Bulgarian market, and to signify the bilateral trade and investment opportunities existing in the food and agricultural sector.

3. Market Constraints and Opportunities:

Constraints:

- Awareness of high quality of the U.S. beef on the Bulgarian market remains moderate among commercial and private sector customers.
- Strong competition from Latin American and European producers/exporters.
- Limited purchasing power of the average Bulgarian customer.
- The price level of the U.S. beef is higher compared to other imported beef.
- U.S. beef currently is not present on the retail level due to its higher price and specific storage and shelf-display requirements.

Opportunities:

- Create positive perception and good image for the U.S. beef by educating the main buyers (restaurants and hotels) about its high quality and diversified tastes.
- Generate widespread publicity.
- Create value by improving the image of U.S. beef by focusing on specific target groups (potential clients) and pursuing a long term advertising effect.
- Enhance FAS’ image as a strong advocate of the U.S. agriculture in Bulgaria as well as a reliable partner for importers of U.S. agricultural products.

4. Expected Results and Desired Outcomes:

The event was attended by the targeted audience (restaurant and hotel owners and chefs), distributors, retailers, specialized media, and other professionals, due to the nature of the main event and their presence at the culinary competition.

5. Actual results and Outcomes:

- The event was held in the International Fair in Plovdiv. The Fairground is one of the largest exhibition venues in Southeast Europe. It is situated on area of 352,000 square meters.
- This year's event represented the sixth edition of the National Culinary Cup Bulgaria with strong competition in several categories: Best Young Chef, Best Young Baker/Confectioner, Best Young Waiter, Best Young Bartender, and Best Young Carving Decorator.



Best Young Chef's competition and table display



Best Young Carving Decorator table display and Best Young Waiter competition jury

- The event was broadly advertised through promotional campaigns organized by the host. FAS Sofia with the support of the Embassy Public Affairs Section submitted a press release and posted information on the [Embassy web site](#). In addition, information about the outcome of the event along with the cooking recipe and photos was posted on the Embassy [Facebook](#) page and received more than 60 “likes” within few hours. One of the most respected specialized media Regal also published an [article](#) about the event on their web site.
- More than 300 visitors to the culinary competition were present in the hall and observed the American cooking demonstration with interest.
- Chef Uti Bachvarov officially opened the event. In his speech he emphasized on the high quality of the U.S. beef, rich offerings and unique nature of American foods. He added that good food brings people together and builds bonds of friendship and he spelled a wish that we work together in strengthening our common cultural and culinary heritage.
- In his opening remarks, the Agricultural Attaché Michael Henney emphasized to the audience of rising culinary artists the strength of U.S. food products as main courses or as ingredients in side-preparations rests in the reliability of its quality consistency and standards adherence. He added that chefs globally value U.S. products for their trueness to U.S. high standards regardless of the supplier, a fact that enables food preparers to derive greater value for their culinary creations.



Chef Uti

Bachvarov and Agricultural Attaché Michael Henney delivering opening remarks

- During the actual culinary demonstration Chef Uti provided thorough information about the specifics of the U.S. beef, the cattle growing process as well as interesting facts about the slaughter, storage, transportation, cutting, aging, and cooking of this very special product. This information was appreciated by the professional audience as it was a summary of many important specifics of the U.S. beef, which distinguished it from similar products by

emphasizing on its unique characteristics.

- The constant dialogue between the chef and the Ag Attaché at which they were exchanging views about the quality of the beef, various cooking methods and additional American ingredients that could be used (like whiskey, specific barbeque sauces, etc.) helped maintain the interest of the audience. In addition, Chef Uti interaction with the audience and his helpers kept the demonstration amusing and memorable.



Chef Uti Bachvarov and Agricultural Attaché Michael Henney performing culinary demonstration

- The local importer of Jack Daniel's was also present at the general event and was advertising the quality Tennessee Whiskey.



- At the end of the demonstration the Ag Attaché and Chef Uti invited the audience to sample the prepared food and to taste the delicious flavor of the American beef.



Chef Uti inviting the audience to taste the food

- Having in mind the growing interest for U.S. beef, our partners expressed strong interest to stage this or similar events annually to develop a tradition to be expected by the target audience.



*Left: Chef Manchev, Ag Marketing Specialist Alex Todorov, Ag Attaché, and Chef Uti
Right: Chef Manchev, Ag Attaché and Ag Specialist Mila Boshnakova
after the culinary demonstration*

6. Recommendations/Follow –up evaluations:

FAS Sofia continues to maintain excellent contact with the importers of U.S. products and is making strong efforts to support them. The good relationship with the importers gives the opportunity to the FAS office to obtain up-to-date information about the market, about trends, and about issues with U.S. competitors and with local regulations. The importers provided productive feedback about the event and expressed high gratitude for the opportunity to promote U.S. products and to present their existence on the local market to a broader audience.

Given the positive outcome and feedback, FAS Sofia would recommend that this or similar promotion be developed into a traditional annual event in order to sustain and further enhance public awareness of thus interest in U.S. products, like beef, whiskey, etc.

7. Cost:

Code/FY: FY 2013
 Cost: **\$ 0.00**
 Source: The host of the event was the Bulgarian Association of Professional Chefs

8. Post Contact Information:

Alexander Todorov
 Agricultural Marketing Assistant
 FAS/USDA
 U.S. Embassy
 16 Kozyak Str.

1408 Sofia, Bulgaria

Tel: (+359-2) 939-5774

Fax:(+359-2) 939-5744

Email: Alexander.todorov@fas.usda.gov

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/>

<http://bulgaria.usembassy.gov/fas.html>