

THE HONG KONG WONTON

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Asia Fruit Logistica 2023 Opening Ceremony



Cooking Demonstrations at Restaurant & Bar

USA PAVILLIONS DAZZLE AT ASIA FRUIT LOGISITCA AND RESTAURANT & BAR TRADE SHOWS

ATO Hong Kong ran two USA Pavillions at Asia Fruit Logisitca and Restaurant & Bar which ran concurrently during the first week of September. Asia Fruit Logistica 2023 is back in Hong Kong following a temporary relocation during the pandemic. To mark this special occasion, the USA Pavilion opened with great fanfare with U.S. Consul General, Greg May, and ATO Hong Kong welcoming 20 U.S. food & beverge companies and producer organizations. Supported by the U.S. Consulate's Public Affairs Section, the ceremony also welcomed local media. Returning U.S. exhibitors commented that despite loosing the last day of the show due to inclement weather, foot traffic was even better than pre-pandemic years. Catch a video highlight of the show on ATO Hong Kong's [LinkedIn](#) page. In addition, ATO worked with a popular local influencer to bring Hong Kong consumers closer to the U.S. products shown at the show, join us for a Pavilio tour on [Facebook](#). In 2022, Hong Kong's combined market for fresh produce and edible tree nuts was valued at \$4.7 billion but the show also attracts buyers from all over the region. Hence, ATO Hong Kong was delighted to host colleagues from ATOs in Seoul, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai. Simultenously, at Restaurant & Bar, the USA Pavilion hosted daily cooking demonstrations with local Chef Nicole Wong highlighting recipes with cherries, Alaskan seafood, rice, duck, chicken, cream cheese, pork and beef. Our thanks to the U.S. Trade Associations and their partners who participated and made these cooking demonstration a popular attraction at the Restaurant & Bar show!

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ATTENTION U.S. EXPORTERS! HONG KONG BUYERS ARE LOOKING FOR:

ATO maintains close contacts with buyers from Hong Kong and Macau. Currently Hong Kong buyers are seeking U.S. suppliers of the following products:

- Coffee syrup (looking for new-to-market brands)
- Beef: Texas Longhorn/Hereford/Red Brangus/Piedmonte (Exclusivity is allowed)
- Ox gallstones
- Whole chickens

If you are interested in supplying these products, please contact ATOHongKong@usda.gov provide your company information, contact person, and email address. We will connect you with interested buyers.

ECONOMY



‘Night Vibes Hong Kong’: Campaign Must be Affordable to Counter Resident Trend to Spend Across the Border, Industry Leaders Say [[SCMP](#), Sep 7; [The Standard](#), Sep 6]

The HKSAR government is set to launch a new campaign to boost Hong Kong's night economy. A source said the campaign is different in nature from the “Happy Hong Kong” campaign and involves a series of new events. It will not simply introduce “street markets” but will focus on revitalizing the city's night market and consolidating various economic sectors in the process of recovery. Activities organized under a campaign to revitalize Hong Kong’s night economy must not only be affordable for tourists but also alluring to residents, who were increasingly crossing the border to spend on weekends, industry leaders commented. Various shopping centers are also expected to participate. Allen Shi Lop-tak, president of the Chinese Manufacturers’ Association, said he was optimistic the events would encourage Hongkongers to spend more in the city amid a recent trend of residents heading across the border for cheaper options. Shi suggested transport discounts should also be offered to make the plan more successful and hoped free or discounted food could be offered to increase foot traffic after sunset. He admitted that a staff crunch in the retail and catering industries remained a “pain point” for businesses that had prevented them from extending their opening hours, adding he hoped the labor

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import scheme introduced by the government, as well as technology, could help ease the crisis. **ATO Notes:** According to several restaurateurs and media reports, dining reservations from Friday to Saturday have dropped in the city as hundreds of Hongkongers are crossing the border to dine and shop in cities like Shenzhen. Some commented that even if bookings were filled, they still do not have the staffing power to support longer opening hours. Facing lower restaurant receipts and higher rental fees, various restaurants have opted to close describing the situation as worse than during the pandemic. All eyes are now on the upcoming Christmas and Lunar Year holidays as the next opportunity to see significant improvement in restaurant bookings.

Seafood Ban Goes Down Well with Most [[The Standard, Sep 1](#)]

Nearly 60 percent of people in a survey said they would eat less Japanese aquatic products while a majority backed the government's ban on imports of Japanese seafood from 10 prefectures. Hong Kong's ban generally responds to public concerns about the impact on the safety of Japanese fisheries. Those findings came in a survey by Hong Kong Research Association of 1,064 people aged 18 or above, with 42 percent also backing the government's policy on night markets. **ATO Notes:** This survey was based on recent occurrences in Hong Kong and consulted more than 1,000 people living in the city to understand the views towards consumption of Japanese seafood after the country's decision to discharge nuclear wastewater. Traders still expect the impact of these bans to be temporary.

Hong Kong Welcomes 4.1 Million Visitors in August, with 3.43 Million from Mainland [[The Standard, Sep 11](#)]

The Hong Kong Tourism Board announced that Hong Kong recorded preliminary visitor arrivals of about 4.1 million in August, representing a 14 percent month-on-month increase, while some 3.43 million of them were from mainland China. The board said the increase in numbers benefited from the peak season of summer holidays, with the figure equivalent to 84 percent of the pre-pandemic level. Cumulatively, over 20 million visitor arrivals were recorded from January to August this year, including 16.5 million from the mainland, the board added. A board spokesman said Hong Kong's tourism industry is recovering at a steady and gradual pace, but factors such as currency exchange rates, airline capacity and the global economic outlook will continue to affect the actual pace of the recovery. **ATO Notes:** Amid the high number of people travelling from Hong Kong to other countries (including daily trips to mainland) during the summer, the city still accumulated 4.1 million visitors. Pre-pandemic the city hosted between 50-60 million visitors a year.

Definitely Bigger Than Vegas, Again: Macau GGR Increase 7-Fold in August [[Macau Daily Times, Sep 1](#)]

The city's casino recovery is sustaining its momentum, with August gaming revenue soaring a staggering 686 percent from last year to the highest level since January 2020. Gross gaming revenue (GGR) reached \$2.1 billion, according to data released by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ). The result surpasses the median analyst estimate of a 678 percent increase and has rebounded to 71 percent of the 2019 levels. By the end of August, overall GGR stood at \$14.1 billion, an increase of 295 percent from a year earlier. Bloomberg analysts say these results indicate that "spending on travel and experiences is withstanding consumer concerns about China's economic slowdown." The gaming industry has been buoyed by the summer holiday season and strong demand

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for leisure activities among mainland consumers, followed by a considerable Hong Kong patron segment (approximately 26 percent). Macau recorded 2.8 million visitor arrivals in July, a recovery of 78 percent of pre-pandemic levels. The second half of the year will test the industry's resilience as China's economic uncertainties endure, while the resumption of group tours to a raft of countries may also mean Macau faces competition in enticing visitors. Macau has been pushing to diversify its economy away from gambling, and the casino sector is reducing its reliance on high rollers from mainland China after Beijing cracked down on capital outflows. **ATO Notes:** Macau's gaming sector is still performing well ahead compared to last year. Hong Kong and China tourists are still the major driving source in arrival numbers. According to contacts in Macau, the economic benefits earned by the gaming sector have not yet trickled down to other sectors.

Gaming Sector's Expenditure Down to \$5 Billion [[Macau Daily Times](#), Sep 11]

Total expenditure for the gaming sector in 2022 went down by 24.7 percent year-on-year to \$5 billion, dragged down by a 66.6 percent decrease in expenditure on Purchase of Goods, Commission Paid & Customer Rebate (\$478 million) amid a change in the sector's business model. According to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the gaming sector's receipts dropped by 49.2 percent year-on-year to \$5.9 billion, with receipts from games of chance (\$5 billion) declining by 51.5 percent. Operating Expenses (\$1.2 billion) and Compensation of Employees (\$2.4 billion) fell by 34.9 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively. **ATO Notes:** Although the gaming revenue in Macau has recorded a significant increase, it has not helped bringing additional expenditures in the gaming sector. Expenditure on purchase of goods, games of chance, operating expense and employee compensation have all dropped year-on-year.

HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS



McDonald's Decision to Stop Selling Coffee Leads to Netizen Speculation [[The Standard](#), Sep 4; [Verdict Food Service](#), Sep 4]

McDonald's announced it will stop providing certain coffee items on the menu. On their social media site and the front page of Headline Daily, a sister publication of The Standard, the catering giant announced it would stop selling "Premium Roast Coffee" and "Ground Coffee" starting from 6 pm today. Netizens stated that the news saddened them, as they preferred having coffee during breakfast. Some said who would visit the chain restaurants and have breakfast if they couldn't even get a coffee and urged McDonald's to do better risk management. Many speculated that it was only an advertising gimmick and that there would be options to upgrade to McCafé drinks. **ATO Notes:** Both Hong Kong's and Macau's McDonald's have made official announcements for discontinuing the offer of two kinds of coffee at their fast-food section and substitute coffee from McCafé, which feature higher quality and

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premium coffee. Brazil and Colombia are the biggest coffee suppliers to the Hong Kong market. According to Euromonitor, McCafé holds around 10 percent of the market, ranking third behind After Starbucks and Pacific Coffee.

NWD and Disneyland join hands to transform Lantau Island into a 'Travel-tainment hub' [[The Standard](#), Sep 7]

New World Development (NWD) and Hong Kong Disneyland Resort will cooperate and turn Lantau Island into a hot destination for Hongkongers and visitors by strengthening transportation connections and launching new tourism and cultural products. The two parties signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at utilizing their strengths to encompass retail, product, and marketing collaborations to bring new experiences to guests on Lantau Island. That included building and operating a retail store at 11 SKIES, located at SKYCITY by the Hong Kong International Airport, and enhancing the transportation connections between Disneyland and 11 SKIES. They will also cooperate to develop and launch new cultural and tourism products to attract visitors. Executive Director of New World Development Sitt Nam-hoi said NWD will continue to explore collaborations with like-minded partners to transform Lantau Island into a new "Travel-tainment hub." Michael Moriarty, Managing Director at Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, said the theme park looks forward to catering to the evolving needs of tourists returning to the city and seeking more experiential travel options. **ATO Notes:** Different developers are working along with the local government to enhance tourism experiences in Hong Kong by introducing new products to the city. The NWD is a diversified real estate company focused on property, hotels, infrastructure and services and department stores (particularly in China). This is one example of how retail and other services in Hong Kong continue to adapt their offerings in response to a changing consumer landscape that remains in transition. Mainlanders coming to Hong Kong are reportedly looking for more experience-based entertainment and dining, rather than the traditional luxury goods shopping.

Gluten-Free: A Dietary Need or a Trend? [[Macau Daily Times](#), Sep 5]

Gluten-free dietary requirements have quickly become popular in our daily lives with a growing range of food products as well as restaurant menus offering "Gluten-Free" options. Macau is no exception, and more people are requesting gluten-free food options from both retailers and the food and beverage industry. **ATO Notes:** People in Macau like many advanced countries are increasingly more health conscious. Gluten-free products are in higher demand with the growing number of diseases caused by digestive disorders. In a study conducted by Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), Hong Kong and Macau are among the top three region in Asia-Pacific with the highest incidence of digestive diseases.

Affordable Hotels Help Invigorate Traditional Districts [[Macau Daily Times](#), Sep 11]

On the sidelines of a hotel opening ceremony, Senna Fernandes, director of tourism, was asked to comment on the recent opening of affordable accommodation venues and the revamp of long-closed hotels in the city's traditional districts. She agreed that these newly opened or revamped accommodations may not offer luxurious surroundings to their customers, but their strategic locations in the heart of the city will be appealing to many tourists whose itineraries may focus on the more

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traditional part of the city. On the other hand, she believes that the opening of affordable accommodation in traditional districts helps to reinvigorate the location. In addition, she looks forward to seeing more lower-end to mid-range hotels in Macau. The tourism bureau is also looking forward to a “more balanced” distribution of different levels of hotel rooms. **ATO Notes:** According to local statistics, as of July 2023, Macau is estimated to have 129 hotels and approximately offering 43,000 rooms. Among the offered rooms, only around 1,700 of them are falling within the “economical accommodation” category. Since Macau is working on diversifying the economy, the city must look into expanding its hospitality offerings in order to meet different visitor needs.



RETAIL

LOHAS Park Residents Scramble for Groceries and Food Under “Saola” [The Standard, Sep 1]

Residents of LOHAS Park were seen queuing in grocery stores and large chain stores as Super Typhoon Saola arrived. LOHAS Park, which was seen as an isolated island with only one department store, FRESH, also met the same fate, with the department store shelves being raided empty. Some residents stated that this was normal because it was the only large department store in the area. They added that it was fortunate that other retail stores, such as Best Mart 360 and Foodville, were still open, so they did not have to fight for groceries. Large chain stores such as McDonald's and KFC that were open despite the No. 8 signal reached full capacity with large waves of both dine-in and takeaway customers. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong owns the reputation for its shopping convenience, it is a usual practice for most families to pay daily visits to retail stores or wet stalls for their groceries given comparatively smaller kitchen sizes. With the recently unexpected weather turbulences disturbing Hong Kong, residents have rushed to shops that are still open for food supplies. While this is a common situation in Hong Kong the last two weeks of inclement weather may give a much-needed recovery boost to recently slumping food and beverage retail sales.

Hong Kong’s Empty Retail Space Falls to 3-year Low, Though Sector Recovery is Hobbled as More Tourists Leave than Enter [SCMP, Sep 1]

Retailers have been opening new shops and expanding in Hong Kong, bringing the city’s empty commercial space to a three-year low of 9 percent in the second quarter. However, the recovery of the sector after three disastrous years of sales diminished by the pandemic faces a challenge. While the number of mainland Chinese visitors to Hong Kong has been increasing, more Hongkongers have been travelling outside the city, shifting their purchasing power elsewhere. As a result, the retail market during the long holidays was not as active as the market had hoped. In 2018, before the unrest took hold, Chinese tourists in the city grew 14.8 percent to 51 million, driving total visitor arrivals to a record 65.1 million, according to government data. Retail sales that year rose 8.8 percent to \$61.85 billion. In

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the first half of this year, retail sales rose 20.7 percent, but these remain 15 percent lower than the equivalent period of 2019, according to Knight Frank in a separate report. Still, the number of tourists was a long way shy of the 34.8 million who came in the first half of 2019. Meanwhile, almost 29 million Hong Kong residents, headed abroad for holidays during this period. Despite the somewhat clouded outlook for the retail sector (except food and beverage), some notable transactions were recorded in the first seven months of 2023. **ATO Notes:** The decreasing number of empty retail space may signify improvements in the non-food and beverage retail sector in Hong Kong. However, in the case of the food and beverage sector, restaurateurs observe that as rent continues to increase, customers continue to travel to mainland to dine forcing some venues to cut back on services or cease operations altogether.

TRADE



300kg Cocaine in Chicken's Feet Fail to Pass Smell Test [[The Standard](#), Sep 1]

Customs seized 302 kilograms of cocaine worth \$29 million in a container of frozen chicken feet in Kwai Chung. The cocaine haul, was shipped in from Brazil, making it the largest drug trafficking case by sea this year. The 40-foot refrigerated container contained 1,800 cartons of frozen chicken feet, and 63 of them in the middle were found to have unusual rectangular objects. One of the boxes was opened and examined, revealing multiple layers of differently colored packaging with white powder inside that tested positive for cocaine. A criminal group is believed to be behind the shipment. **ATO Notes:** Brazil is the second largest supplier of poultry products to Hong Kong after mainland China. However, imports from Brazil have been trending down since 2019 substituted with imports from mainland and Thailand, which have increased 5 percent and 7 percent, respectively, over the last two years.

Farmer Loses 100 Pigs Worth Over 0.13 Million to Flooding in Northern District [[The Standard](#), Sep 8]

A Ta Kwu Ling pig farmer suffered losses of over \$0.13 million after his farm was flooded and most of his livestock drowned by the hours-long torrential downpour in the region. Floodwaters inundated owner Yu's farm, sweeping away more than 100 pigs worth over a million dollars. Yu and his five business partners could not withstand the torrent and were forced to watch helplessly as the pigs were washed away and drowned. Some pigs survived but are said to be weak after their drowning ordeal and are expected to die shortly. Yu, who has more than 30 years of experience running his farm in Hung Lung Hang, said that the area is frequently inundated, and he and his wife are constantly on guard, often working through the night to protect the pigs during the rainy season. Except for Sha Tau Kok, numerous villages saw varying degrees of flooding, and another pig farm in the nearby Ta Kwu Ling area was also severely flooded due to the rain. There have been at least five significant floods over the past two years, allegedly exacerbated by individuals working on projects next to the farms and clogging the

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drains with debris, says Yu. The farmer has urged the government to handle the flooding issue in the Northern District, saying he is concerned that extreme weather will become more frequent in Hong Kong and there will be more heavy rains. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong has maintained a small number of pig farms that will provide fresh slaughtered pork to its market. As of 2021, there were still 43 local pig farms in Hong Kong and the local production was valued at around \$38 million. After the Hong Kong government implemented its Voluntary Surrender Scheme in 2008, there are less farmers interested in maintaining farms in the city.

Ready-to-eat Raw Oyster Sample Detected with Excessive E. Coli [[CFS Press Release, Sep 5](#)]

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced that a sample of ready-to-eat raw oysters was found with excessive Escherichia coli (E. coli). The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a restaurant in Mong Kok for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programmed. According to the Microbiological Guidelines for Food, if the most probable number of E. coli of live or raw bivalve mollusks intended for direct consumption exceeds the level of 700 per 100 grams, the sample is considered unsatisfactory. The CFS has informed the restaurant concerned of the above irregularity and instructed it to suspend the sale of the affected food product.

ATO Notes: Hong Kong is a big market for oyster consumption, cooked or raw. Japan is currently the top oyster supplier to Hong Kong contributing \$24 million in products in 2022. Imports from Japan are expected to slow temporarily following the Hong Kong government's ban on Japanese seafood products (10 prefectures only) in August 2023. France is the second largest supplier to Hong Kong, but imports of French oysters decreased 3 percent during the first seven months of 2023. Conversely, U.S. oysters supplies increased 54 percent to \$3 million during the same period.

Import of Poultry Meat and Products from Areas in South Africa Suspended [[CFS Press Release, Sep 7](#)]

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced the suspension of imports of poultry meat and products from Rustenburg Local Municipality of Northwest Province and Bela-Bela Local Municipality of Limpopo Province in South Africa. The action follows a notification from the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H7N6 avian influenza in these areas. A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong has currently established a protocol with South Africa for the import of poultry meat but not for poultry eggs.

According to the Census and Statistics Department, no poultry meat was imported into Hong Kong from South Africa in the first six months of this year. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong has not imported poultry or eggs products from South Africa since 2021. It is worth noting that many global poultry suppliers are still affected by Avian Influenza and subject to bans. ATO Hong Kong continues to work with sister agency Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to respond to bans on U.S. affected counties. On September 15, 2023, the Hong Kong government announced the resumption of imports in 29 more U.S. regions. As of this report, only 3 counties in one U.S. state remain affected. In 2020, Hong Kong imported a total of \$1.4 billion of worth of poultry and eggs products from its global suppliers. However, this number decreased to \$1.2 billion due to the pandemic and avian influenza. Using 2020 as a benchmark for regular imports, Hong Kong imported \$107 million worth of U.S. poultry and \$39 million worth of U.S. eggs. While U.S. exports of poultry products improved dramatically during the

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first seven months of 2023, U.S. egg exports have not fared as well. Traders in Hong Kong and Macau report that while the price gap between U.S. eggs and other major suppliers has diminished, it will take some time for customers (particularly in the food service sector) to restart procuring U.S. eggs following the shipping and supplies woes faced in late 2021 – early 2022.

Hong Kong Authorities Follow Up on Vegetables Imported from Japan Suspected of Breaching Food Safety Order [[HKSAR Press Release, Sep 14](#), [HKSAR Press Release, Sep 1-14](#)]

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear wastewater from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits imports of all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama. For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt, and seaweeds that are not prohibited from import, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market. On September 14, 2023, CFS announced that vegetables from regulated prefectures were found when the CFS inspected a consignment of food imported from Japan and the importer concerned was suspected in breach of the relevant Food Safety Order (the Order). The products concerned have been marked and sealed by the CFS and have not entered the market. According to the Order, all vegetables, fruits, milk, milk beverages and dried milk originating from Fukushima are banned from importing into Hong Kong while such foods originating from Chiba, Tochigi, Ibaraki and Gunma prefectures are allowed to be imported on the condition that they are accompanied with a radiation certificate and an exporter certificate issued by the Japanese authority certifying that the radiation levels do not exceed the guideline levels and are fit for human consumption. **ATO Notes:** Since the Fukushima nuclear plant accident occurred, Hong Kong authorities require imports to be accompanied by a radiation certificate to certify the condition of goods. In 2022, Japan was the third largest food and agricultural supplier to Hong Kong accounting for \$1.7 billion of the city's global imports. In the first seven months of this year, imports from Japan held steady increasingly less than one percent. Japanese vegetables are not one of the major imports, the most popular Japanese food products consumed in Hong Kong are seafood (\$483 million), bread and cereal (\$ 192 million) and fruits (\$176 million).

Oysters with Mislabeled Origin Intercepted at Airport [[Macau Daily Times, Sep 1](#)]

A batch of unshelled oysters from Japan has been intercepted at Macau International Airport after import inspections revealed the origins had been misattributed, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has disclosed. After Japan started discharging processed wastewater from its nuclear power plants in Fukushima last week, the Macau government imposed a ban on Japanese produce and related products from 10 areas of the country. Pursuant to Chief Executive Dispatch No 134/2023, enacted on August 24, fresh food, food of animal origin, sea salt and seaweed from the prefectures of Fukushima, Chiba, Tochigi, Ibaraki, Gunma, Miyagi, Niigata, Nagano, and Saitama, as well as the Tokyo Metropolis can no longer be imported into Macau. According to the IAM, the declared origin of the batch of oysters is from Iwate Prefecture of Japan. After inspecting the batch of produce with radioactivity meters – a new practice applicable only to produce from Japan – IAM officers discovered on the

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external packaging that the oysters were in fact from Miyagi Prefecture. The IAM reminded traders to refrain from importing food from prohibited areas and keep records and documents of incoming goods so that authorities can trace the source and flow of food when required. According to the IAM, this is the first case of its kind after the enactment of the import ban. The IAM added that it would escalate its efforts in inspecting Japanese food products at import and “safeguard food safety in Macau” at the retail level. **ATO Notes:** Similar to Hong Kong, Macau has also suspended the import of seafood from Japan due to their wastewater discharge plan. Hong Kong and Macau are both monitoring the imports from Japan under their new policies.

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

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