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Report Highlights:

Bite size local news, Post reports and activity summaries wrapped by ATO Hong Kong. In this issue: U.S. leather and fur leave an impression at Hong Kong fashion and materials trade shows; Cotton mills and brands converge at CCI's Cotton USA Outlook; Alaskan seafood draws young consumers; American Hardwood Export Council honored at AIA awards; Hong Kong takes top spots in Asia's 50 Best Restaurants awards; Michelin honors 98 restaurants in Hong Kong and Macau; and Hong Kong hits 10 million visitors in first two months of 2026.

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

Bite Size Local News, Post Report and Activity Summaries

THE HONG KONG WONTON

wrapped by ATO Hong Kong

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U.S. Leather and Fur Industries Showcase Premium Products at Hong Kong Trade Fairs

The Asia Pacific Leather Fair (APLF) and the Hong Kong International Fur & Fashion Fair (IFF) were held in Hong Kong from March 12–14, bringing together global buyers and suppliers from the leather and fur industries. At APLF, the Leather and Hide Council of America (LHCA) led nine member companies in the U.S. Pavilion, where Deputy Consul General David Schlaefer greeted exhibitors and delivered remarks at a LHCA trade reception attended by more than 70 industry professionals. In 2025, U.S. exports of hides and skins to China totaled $296 million, down 32 percent from the previous year due largely to retaliatory tariffs, while exports to Hong Kong rose 39 percent to $2 million. At the 45th IFF, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture represented two U.S. mink suppliers, highlighting premium products and underscoring the U.S. role as a source of high-quality fur. Hong Kong remains an important trading hub for the fur industry, importing $57 million in fur skins and re-exporting $41 million in 2025, including $1.2 million from the United States.

Cotton Council Strengthens U.S. Cotton Partnerships in Hong Kong

The COTTON USA Outlook forum, held March 24 at the Kowloon Shangri-La in Hong Kong, brought together 170 participants, including representatives from global brands, retailers, mills, manufacturers. Organized by Cotton Council International, discussions at the forum highlighted the competitiveness of U.S. cotton as a high-quality, sustainable, and traceable supply option, while also identifying tariffs as a key driver shaping global cotton trade flows and sourcing decisions. Following the presentations, Deputy Consul General David Schlaefer presented awards to 14 U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol mill members.

Wild-caught Alaska Seafood Getting Wide Attention from Hong Kong Gen Z Consumers

From March 3–22, the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) partnered with Food House Gourmet Plaza to introduce exclusive dishes featuring Alaska Pacific Ocean Perch, Black Cod, and Pink Salmon across eight food-court brands at a dining destination popular with Gen Z consumers. ASMI also launched a retail promotion with Boatat Food Market running from March 20 to April 19 and featuring Alaska Pollock, Black Cod, Pacific Ocean Perch, and Pink Salmon at 10 locations across the eco-conscious supermarket chain.

American Hardwood Export Council Celebrates Design Excellence with American Institute of Architects

On March 6, ATO Hong Kong joined the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) at the 2025 American Institute of Architects (AIA) Hong Kong Honors & Awards Celebration. More than 350 architects, designers, and professionals from the engineering, planning, and construction sectors attended. AIA recognized AHEC for its strong support of AIA programming and highlighted U.S. hardwoods as a premium natural, renewable, and sustainable material for architecture and interior design.

ECONOMY

Visitor Numbers up 18 Percent in First Two Months of Year [RTHK, Mar. 17]
Hong Kong recorded nearly 10 million visitor arrivals in the first two months of the year, up 18 percent from a year earlier. The number of mainland travelers increased by 22 percent, reaching nearly 7.9 million during the period. Among long-haul markets, the number of visitors from Australia, France, and Germany grew by 20 to 30 percent year on year. **ATO Notes:** The rebound in visitor arrivals strengthens Hong Kong's role as a regional consumer and services hub. Stronger tourism should support demand in food and beverage, retail, and hospitality, creating opportunities for U.S. products to build brands, test products, and expand distribution to a more global clientele.

Singapore Offices Cost the Most to Outfit, Asia-Pacific Survey Says [SCMP, Mar. 4]
According to real estate consultancy Knight Frank, Singapore is the most expensive city in the Asia-Pacific region to outfit an office, driven by increased labor costs, a shortage of contractors and strict building standards. Hong Kong ranked eighth, with an average of US$1,292 per square meter, while the major mainland Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen all came in at US$929 per square meter, placing them 11th. **ATO Notes:** As regional costs rise, Hong Kong offers companies a relatively cost-efficient, globally connected base in Asia, with lower set-up costs than Singapore and world-class financial and logistics infrastructure.

HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS

Maxim's Palace Returns to MOKO Mong Kok with Dim Sum Carts, Open-Roast Kitchen as HK Dining Rebounds [The Standard, Mar. 10]
Maxim's Group has opened a new Maxim's Palace branch at Mong Kok, expanding its flagship Chinese restaurant footprint. Under Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Bernard Chan noted that retail and catering consumption data have rebounded in the past six months, driven by a growing

number of tourists attracted by more than 200 mega events last year. A buoyant property and stock market also spurred spending. The restaurant features a new Maxim's Dim Sum Academy opening in April, offering hands-on dim sum workshops. **ATO Notes:** Restaurant receipts were flat in 2025, with Chinese restaurants experiencing a 2.9 percent decline in value and a 4.3 percent drop in volume, while non-Chinese restaurants saw increases of 4 percent in value and 3.4 percent in volume. This trend is primarily attributed to Hong Kong consumers choosing to dine in Shenzhen, where Chinese restaurants offer greater value-for-money.

HK Launches First 24/7 Automated Meal Robot [The Standard, Mar. 15]
Hong Kong has launched its first smart catering robot system. The system applies AI technology to local food and beverage retail scenarios and prepares and dispenses hot meals around the clock, fully automating the ordering and serving process. The system is launched by China Resources Enterprise Property Investment Company, integrating innovative technological solutions from the mainland with local business expertise. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong's foodservice industry has long struggled with high labor costs and a shortage of staff. This project aims to address labor and space constraints and aligns with the Hong Kong government's 2026–27 Budget measures to accelerate AI industrialization.

Michelin Guide Hong Kong and Macau 2026 Full List: China Tang Earns 1-Star Status [SCMP, Mar. 19]
The Michelin Guide Hong Kong and Macau 2026 honors 98 restaurants, with 15 new to the list. The latest selection of starred restaurants for 2026 includes 77 in Hong Kong and 21 in Macau. **ATO Notes:** The 2026 Michelin Guide features several prestigious new additions in both Hong Kong and Macau. This growth, compared to the 2025 rankings, reflects the remarkable resilience and high standards of the local foodservice industry.

HK Restaurants Sweep Top Two Spots at Asia's 50 Best Restaurants [The Standard, Mar. 26]
Hong Kong claimed the top two positions at the Asia's 50 Best Restaurants awards. In total, 10 Hong Kong restaurants are among Asia's top 100. The results follow recent Michelin Guide Hong Kong & Macau 2026 and Black Pearl Restaurant Guide, with Hong Kong now boasting 77 Michelin-starred restaurants and 39 Black Pearl-listed establishments, both increases from the previous year. **ATO Notes:** This recognition cements Hong Kong's status as a global hospitality capital. The city is now home to Asia's Best Restaurant (The Chairman), the World's Best Bar (Bar Leone), and the World's Best Hotel (Rosewood Hong Kong).

RETAIL

Provisional Statistics of Retail Sales for January 2026 [HKSAR, Mar. 4]
The value of total retail sales in January 2026 increased by 5.5 percent compared with the same month in 2025. Of the total retail sales value in January 2026, online sales accounted for 8.1 percent. The value of online retail sales in that month increased by 25.1 percent compared with the same month in 2025. On the other hand, the value of sales of commodities in supermarkets decreased by 5.0 percent in January 2026 over a year earlier. **ATO Notes:** The January data point to a gradual retail recovery, led by tourism-related and discretionary spending. Softer supermarket sales likely reflect seasonal timing around Lunar New Year rather than a broader weakening in consumer demand.

Inaugural Asia Coffee Music Fest at KTSP Draws 22,000 Visitors [The Standard, Mar. 11]
The first-ever "Asia Coffee Music Fest," held at the Kai Tak Sports Park East Village, concluded last Sunday after a successful three-day run. The organizer expressed hope to develop the festival into an annual mega event, with the goal of continuing to connect coffee communities across Asia and establishing Hong Kong as a regional hub for coffee culture exchange. **ATO Notes:** The strong turnout suggests strong consumer interest in experiential lifestyle events, with growth potential in specialty coffee, foodservice, and related retail categories.

Singapore Heritage-Inspired Bakery Brand Old Seng Choong Opens First Overseas Store in HK [The Standard, Mar. 11]
Singapore's heritage-inspired bakery brand, Old Seng Choong, has opened its first overseas store in Central. Co-launched by the brand and OCBC Bank (Hong Kong) with a "Bank × Retail" concept, the new store marks a significant milestone in the brand's global expansion and reinforces Hong Kong's appeal as a launchpad for Asian consumer brands seeking regional growth. **ATO Notes:** The opening highlights Hong Kong's appeal as a launch market for regional consumer brands and its receptiveness to premium, heritage-led food concepts and hybrid retail formats.

Sotheby's Hong Kong Wine Retail Space Gets a Facelift [The Drinks Business, Mar. 18]
The auction house Sotheby's is set to open a new retail concept in Hong Kong, positioning it as a hub for client acquisition and market testing, as it targets wealthy collectors amid a softening fine wine market. Stocks will include wines from top producers of Bordeaux, Burgundy, Napa and Italy, usually

valued under $1,000 ($7,800 HKD). **ATO Notes:** The 2025 Wine & Spirits Market Report by Sotheby's underscores the resilience of Hong Kong's fine wine sector, driven by increased investor appetite.

TRADE AND POLICY

FEHD Prosecutes 21 Shops for Mishandling Pig Carcasses in City-Wide Operation [The Standard, Mar. 10]

In a sweeping operation across the city, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has inspected over 200 fresh provision shops, issuing 47 warnings and 21 prosecutions for mishandled pig carcasses and associated rodent risks. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong's enforcement action against mishandling of local pig carcasses highlights the territory's strict food safety and licensing regime for meat retailers but does not involve or affect U.S. pork. U.S. pork exports to Hong Kong reached US$35.2 million in 2025, up 9.5 percent from the previous year.

130 Tons of Chicken Feet Worth $38,462 (HK$300,000) Stolen from Tin Shui Wai Warehouse [The Standard, Mar. 18]

A mainland Chinese woman and her business partner ordered 14 containers of chicken feet from Brazil in April last year. Due to an avian influenza outbreak in Brazil, the containers were unable to be shipped to Hong Kong and were stored at the Yantian port. Three months later, a container manager arranged for them to be moved to the Lau Fau Shan warehouse. The woman had been selling the chicken feet in batches and discovered on Tuesday that the remaining five containers had been removed. Police have classified the case as theft. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong suspends U.S. poultry imports by county and requires detailed epidemiological information before resuming trade. The Brazilian chicken paw incident, involving storage in Lau Fau Shan after a Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza-related disruption, highlights the complexity of monitoring re-routed and warehoused poultry consignments in Hong Kong. ATO Hong Kong recommends that U.S. poultry exporters regularly consult the FSIS Export Library for to verify current eligibility and product-specific requirements before shipping.

CFS to Waive All Fees Related to Certification of Food Products for Two Years Until March 31, 2028 [HKSAR, Mar. 18]

The 2026-27 Budget proposed that Hong Kong's food industry can leverage its reputation for quality to further expand into the mainland and international markets. The Government will continue discussions with mainland authorities, seeking market access and simplified customs arrangements on the mainland for a wider range of local food products. This measure aims to facilitate the further opening up of the

mainland and international markets for industry. The three newly added categories of food products are tea leaves, seasonings (ground) and noodles (without meat ingredients). **ATO Notes:** Extending the Advance Release Arrangement to tea, seasonings, and noodles, together with a two-year waiver of CFS certification fees, signals a policy push to grow Hong Kong–manufactured food exports to mainland and international markets. This creates more opportunity for local plants to use Hong Kong as a value-adding and branding base for processed foods entering mainland.

MACAU

Macau Five-star Hotel Rates fall in February Despite Chinese New Year Surge [TEAM Publishing GGR Asia, Mar 25]

Average nightly rates for Macau's five-star hotels fell about 2–3 percent year-on-year in February and in the first two months of 2026, even as occupancy rose to about 96 percent. This continues a downward pricing trend that began in 2025, reversing the strong rate growth seen in 2023–24. Five-star properties, most in integrated casino resorts, now account for nearly 58 percent of Macau's 45,000 hotel rooms, with five-star room supply up nearly 7 percent versus January 2025. **ATO Notes:** Macau welcomed 40.1 million visitors in 2025, with hotel occupancy near 90 percent and five-star room supply up sharply. Macau's combination of high occupancy, expanding room supply, and softer pricing suggests a more price-sensitive visitor market.

ATO EVENTS CALENDAR

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Apr. 2026	Apr. 9	Virginia Oyster & Whiskey Seminar (Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services)
	Apr. 15	U.S. Men's and Women's National Team Rugby Sevens Reception (with FCS)
	Apr. 21 - 24	Hong Kong Buyer Mission at Food & Hospitality Asia (ATO HK)
May 2026	May 26 - 28	Vinexpo Asia (CWI, OWB)
	May 26 – 30	Hong Kong Buyer Mission at THAIFEX-Anuga Asia (ATO HK)
	May 29	The 1976 Judgment of Paris Blind Tasting – 50th Anniversary Celebration (CWI)
	TBC	U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong's 250th Anniversary Craft Beer Launch (USGBC, Yakima Chief Hops, ATO HK)
Jun. 2026	Jun. 23	U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong and Macau's 250th Anniversary of the United States Independence Day Reception
	Jun. 25	American Wine Excellence in Macau: 50th Anniversary of the Judgement of Paris (CWI/ATO HK)
	Jun. 26	California Wine Month: "Sips of Summer" Media Day (CWI)

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Attachments:

No Attachments.