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Sales of Lunch Boxes in Convenience Stores Surge

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018040906871>

Summary: Sales of take-out lunch boxes offered in convenience stores amounted to 250 billion won in 2017, up 21 percent from the previous year. The sales are likely to be on a continuous surge in the coming year as more value-concerned consumers are attracted to these affordable meals offered in convenience stores. Leading convenience store chains are also making extra efforts to better meet the consumer traffic. For example, CU, the leading convenience store chain in Korea, has diligently launched a wide diversity of new take-out lunch boxes with quality ingredients under trendy recipe ideas. Seven Eleven has launched a new store format that features "lunch box café" corner in the store where consumers can seat down and enjoy the lunch boxes more comfortably.

"Korea should Continue to Ban Imports of Seafood from Fukushima Japan", ROKG Appeals to WTO

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018040907191>

Summary: Korean government has filed an appeal to WTO stating that the safety of Fukushima seafood is still in question and Korean government's import ban should be maintained. WTO court ruled recently that Korea's import ban on Fukushima seafood does not meet WTO agreement.

Rice Price Up 30% This Year

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018040452361>

Summary: According to the Korean Agro-Fishery Marketing Corporation (aT), the retail price of local rice marked 187,796 won per 80 kg bag on average on April 4, which was 30 percent higher than a year ago. The high price of local rice is due to a reduced harvest in 2017 (down 5.3 percent from 2016) and increased purchases by the Korean government for reserve stock (720,000 metric tons for 2017 program, which was 370,000 metric tons larger than 2016 program). The Korean government plans to release 83,600 metric tons of reserve stock to stabilize the market price but marketers assume that the release volume will be too small to make a significant effect. The high price of rice has reduced Korean government subsidy spending to local rice farmers which is calculated based on the difference between the target price (180,000 won per 80 kg bag) and the actual price. So far this year, the Korean government spent 539 billion won for the subsidy program, which was one third of the spending last year.

Revised Liquor Tax Act Takes Effects on April 1 ... Local Craft Breweries Welcome Deregulation

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018040452361>

Summary: Local craft breweries are expecting further expansion of their business as the revised Liquor Tax Act took effect on April 1. The revision in particular allows craft breweries to sell their products directly to retail stores, including hypermarket grocery stores and convenience stores. In addition, the revision has eased facility requirements and liquor taxes that local craft breweries are subject to. The improved regulatory environment is likely to lead to openings of many new craft breweries in Korea. The total number of craft breweries in Korea, which is now about 70, is forecast to reach 100 by the end of this year. OB Beer, a leading beer company in Korea under the umbrella of AB Inbev, announced on April 2 that it had acquired Hand & Malt Brewery, a leading local craft brewery.

'Hidden Marketing' Strategy Use Spreading in the Food and Beverage Industry

<http://www.hankookilbo.com/v/593e9cddb74448090ad2b023e901980>

Summary: With Korea's food makers diversifying their business for a new profit source, using a hidden marketing strategy is spreading among the food and beverage manufacturers in Korea. Using a hidden marketing strategy, food makers reveal neither the names nor logos of their companies on their new brands for the purpose of raising consumers' curiosity about their

newly launched products. Hidden marketing is primarily used when the company name that has been maintained for decades does not fit its new brand image. For instance, Korea's largest soy sauce maker, Sempio, launched its new Italian food ingredient brand, Fontana, which has been selling pasta, soup and salad dressing in the market since 2003. But the Sempio logo can't be seen on Fontana products as the maker judges the Italian food ingredients not to be well matched with the company's natural image of soy sauce. In the same manner, Maeil Dairies runs its high-quality coffee chain, Paul Bassett, and Namyang Dairy Products opened its ice cream and dessert store, 1964 Baekmidang, in 2014.

USTR Pressures Korea for Additional Ag Market Access

<http://news.donga.com/list/3/00/20180402/89409653/1>

Summary: USTR's 'Global Trade Barrier Report 2018' released on March 30 pointed out Korea's trade barriers on American agricultural products. In particular, the report included fresh fruit issues which were not included last year. The report indicated that the U.S. pressured Korea to provide market access for American fresh apples and pears. The report also indicated that the U.S. pressured Korea to expand market access for American fresh blueberries from additional states; and to improve the import process for American fresh cherries. The Korean government explained that import restrictions on American fresh fruits are based on scientific reasons and meet the official procedures established to secure sanitary inspections on risky products.

Each Korean Adult Consumed 87 Bottles of Soju in 2017

<http://news.hankyung.com/article/2018040124191>

Summary: According to the Korean National Statistics Office (NSO), sales of soju (traditional Korean distilled spirits) totaled 1.3 million kilo liters in 2017, up 0.5 percent from the previous year. In other words, each Korean adult consumed 87 bottles (375 ml bottle) of soju on average last year. Consumption of soju has been on a steady growth in recent years. On the other hand, consumption of mak-gul-li (traditional Korean rice wine) declined 2.7 percent in 2017 to 0.3 million kilo liters.

The information in this report was compiled by the [Agricultural Trade Office \(ATO\)](#) at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, South Korea. The press summaries contained herein do NOT reflect USDA, the U.S. Embassy, or other U.S. government agency official policy or view point. U.S. food exporters can learn more about market opportunities in South Korea by reviewing ATO Seoul's [Exporter Guide](#) and other reports available at www.fas.usda.gov by clicking on "attaché reports."