Section 201 investigation of lamb meat · U.S. International Trade Commission · Inv. No. TA-201-80

What we heard: testimony highlights

At the ITC's public injury hearing on October 16, 2026, U.S. lamb processors and economists who have studied the market told the Commission what drought, a shrinking flock and their customers' needs mean for America's lamb supply. These are their words.

> "The bottom line: lack of rain has been a major challenge for domestic lamb farmers and lamb meat producers during the period."[2]
>
> **Thomas J. Prusa**, Professor of Economics, Rutgers University · at the hearing

Drought and the flock

A drought that thinned the breeding flock

"Drought also causes producers to cull mature breeding ewes. This reduction in the breeding flock contracts the U.S. lamb crop, depressing slaughter counts and elevating wholesale prices well into the future. ... in a separate analysis, I found that breeding stock typically takes at least four years to recover from a significant drought event."[1]

Rodney Ludema, Professor of Economics, Georgetown University · written testimony

"Drought and decreasing U.S. flock sizes have reduced the number of lambs for slaughter."[1]

Anthony Catelli Jr., President and CEO, Catelli Brothers · written testimony

"... the areas that had the severest droughts are the areas that had the deepest declines in the ewe counts."[2]

Thomas J. Prusa, Professor of Economics, Rutgers University · at the hearing

Supply

Imports fill the gap

"U.S. processors of only American lambs cannot meet the necessary specifications and year-round consistency because the U.S. flock is limited seasonally and by the number of animals available to process."[1]

Michael Forrest, Chief Executive Officer, Thomas Foods International USA · written testimony

"When we cannot get enough American lamb, we choose to purchase more imported lamb, which is counter-seasonal and available year-round, particularly in the summer."[1]

Anthony Catelli Jr., President and CEO, Catelli Brothers · written testimony

Processors

Steady supply, stronger processors

"The record shows that U.S. producers who process at least some imported lamb had consistently higher profitability than those that rely on domestic lamb exclusively. This stronger performance is not because the cost of imported lamb was lower, but rather because it provided more stable supply, which resulted in other production costs being lower."[1]

James Dougan, Partner, ION Economics · written testimony

The market

Different products for different buyers

"American lamb is a distinctively different product. It's a premium lamb considered the best in the world, and we market it that way."[2]

Anthony Catelli Jr., President and CEO, Catelli Brothers · at the hearing

"The only way that we can meet this demand is by offering both domestic and imported lamb."[1]

Anthony Catelli Jr., President and CEO, Catelli Brothers, on customers' demand for a variety of lamb · written testimony

"... the first thing you talk about is the specification. Is it grass-fed? Is it hormone-free, etc.? What volume can you provide? Can you provide it year-round? And they are the discussions that happen before you even talk about price."[2]

Michael Forrest, Chief Executive Officer, Thomas Foods International USA, on talks with customers · at the hearing

The way forward

Protect supply. Grow demand.

"... growing the market is critical for the domestic lamb meat producers to thrive. This means getting lamb more regularly into the American diet and that requires getting multiple cuts available in all supermarkets across the country."[1]

Thomas J. Prusa, Professor of Economics, Rutgers University · written testimony

"... a trade restrictive safeguard measure on imported lamb meat will effectively reduce the demand for lamb from any source and be damaging to domestic producers."[1]

Michael Forrest, Chief Executive Officer, Thomas Foods International USA · written testimony

We look forward to working with U.S. industry, the ITC, and the administration toward an outcome that protects supply, builds demand and grows appetite for lamb.

What happens next

OCT 23, 2026	Post-hearing briefs due.[3]
BY NOV 13, 2026	ITC injury determination.[3]
DEC 1, 2026	Remedy hearing, only if the ITC makes an affirmative injury determination or is equally divided.[3]
BY JAN 11, 2027	ITC report to the President.[3]

Sources

PDF page numbers, with statement page numbers in brackets

1. Meat & Livestock Australia and Thomas Foods International USA, hearing testimony and presentation, filed Oct. 15, 2026. Written testimony of Anthony Catelli Jr., pp. 7 [1], 8 [2], 9 [3]; Michael Forrest, pp. 12 [2], 13 [3]; James Dougan, p. 19 [3]; Thomas J. Prusa, p. 25 [2]; Rodney D. Ludema, p. 29 [3]. EDIS doc. 897894.
2. Testimony at the ITC's public injury hearing, Lamb Meat (Injury), Oct. 16, 2026, afternoon session, in passages labeled: Prusa, 15:05:46 ET and 16:23:16 ET; Catelli, 15:42:46 ET; Forrest, 16:46:40 ET. Quoted from an unofficial transcript, not the official ITC record. ITC hearing page.
3. ITC, notice of institution and scheduling, Lamb Meat, Inv. No. TA-201-80, 91 Fed. Reg. 45283 (July 20, 2026), pp. 45283–45285. govinfo.gov.

Quotes are exact; an ellipsis marks words left out. Documents marked EDIS are on the ITC's public docket. Opening them requires a free EDIS account, which you can create with Login.gov.

Media contact: media@protectlambsupply.org · protectlambsupply.org

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