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PRIME MINISTER

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Ministerial Consultations on Japanese

Beef Imports

The Minister for Primary Industry is to visit Tokyo to advise the Japanese Government of Australia's concerns over the Japanese decision to reduce beef imports in 1981/82 by 8,000 tonnes.

This visit also reflects growing Government concern at the progressive decline in Australia's share of the Japanese domestic market following two successive quota reductions this year and the reduction in Japanese chilled beef imports.

Australia's share of Japanese beef imports has fallen from around 85% in 1976/77 to about 77% in 1979/80. It was down to 73% in the first 8 months of 1981.

Mr Nixon, who will be accompanied by senior officials, will be in a position to indicate clearly to Japanese Ministers the concerns which Australia feels as a result of the restrictions on Australian beef.

The continuation of these trends would have serious consequences for the Australian beef industry. The Government, therefore, considers that the situation warrants urgent consultation between Ministers, aimed at avoiding the issue escalating into a more serious problem between the two countries.

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