

GLOBAL
OUTLOOK

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It is not difficult to appreciate what most of the governing factors are in setting freighting rates that affect the meat industry. Aside from the usual – albeit recently diminishing – margins and sometimes huge profits the shipping lines have to make to stay in business, the most obvious are the massive and ever-increasing bunker (oil) costs, as well as staff and construction costs for those huge container ships that ply their way from one side of the world to the other.

But something less expected and much more of a recent phenomenon is the significant role – and cost – played in combating piracy on the high seas. It's a growing problem and one not only restricted to vessels far from shore. Only this month, armed pirates raided a cargo ship carrying reefer (refrigerated) containers full of Irish fish, which was actually anchored in a Nigerian port. Having ransacked the ship they made good their escape, taking several of the ship's officers with them.

All of this is finally having some traction at the highest levels, with Prime Minister David Cameron joining Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations and US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton at a recent international conference on piracy, where he pledged a crackdown on Somali pirates and their 'kingpins'.

Among other developments, Cameron also announced the creation of an international taskforce on pirate ransoms, bringing together experts from across the world to better understand the ransom business cycle and how to break it.

How successful this new era of international co-operation will be is yet to be realised. In the meantime, the cost of attempting to manage and alleviate the scourge of piracy will, ultimately, continue to cascade down the meat logistics supply chain and hit importers and exporters of meat products where it hurts most.

Deadline looming for SuperMeat entries

There is still time to enter your products into the UK's most prestigious meat competition, the SuperMeat & Fish Awards 2012.

Anyone supplying one of our participating retailers can enter the competition, which aims to seek the best meat and fish products across the supermarket retail spectrum. Taking part in this year's competition are seven leading retailers, including Aldi, Asda, The Co-operative, Lidl, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Tesco.

Producers can enter their products directly by contacting Rebecca George on 01293 610422, or emailing her on rebecca.george@wrbm.com. Closing date for entries is 23 March.



The SuperMeat & Fish Awards, organised by *Meat Trades Journal*, are the leading awards of their type and provide a showcase for the best products and retailers throughout the UK. Judging both products and

stores across a range of categories, the awards climax, with one retailer taking home the title of Meat & Fish Retailer of the Year.

Ed Bedington, editor of *MTJ*, which organises the awards, said: "This is always a great competition and this year will be no different. We've assembled a wide-ranging panel of judges from a variety of backgrounds to ensure the products are put through their paces."

The awards will take place at the Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, London on 5 July, and the event is sponsored by Bpex, Eblex, Hybu Cig Cymru - Meat Promotion Wales, the Livestock & Meat Commission and Vion Food UK.

PARTICIPANTS



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Vion sees Scottish strike action deferred

Planned industrial action at Vion Food Group's Cambuslang added-value products factory outside Glasgow, has been postponed for two weeks, Vion has confirmed.

The dispute centres on the annual pay award negotiations, after workers rejected a 2% pay increase and changes to holiday entitlement in October 2011 and subsequently voted in favour of strike action. Around 300 staff walked out on 20 February and were due to strike again on 8 March and 12 March.

However, Vion confirmed that it had been informed the planned industrial action by Unite had been postponed for two weeks. Unite convenor Scot Walker told *Meat Trades Journal* that the union had thought it prudent to suspend action while an assessment was carried out. He had previously said that the workforce had been left with no option but to strike, claiming that the pay deal in the current climate amounted to a pay cut in real terms.



Strikes at the firm's Cambuslang factory have been postponed for two weeks

"We hope Vion will reconsider, but we are prepared to dig in for the long haul," he said.

He told *MTJ* that Cambuslang would be directly affected by the loss of a Sainsbury's contract, which had accounted for around 40% of the operations at the site, but added that there were incoming contracts from The Co-operative and an additional contract from Marks & Spencer.

IOM abattoir sees Tesco suspension

Tesco has told the Isle of Man abattoir that, for the moment, it can no longer take its meat due to concerns over food safety standards. Tesco said it made the decision following a routine inspection of the plant.

The Isle of Man abattoir is the only slaughterhouse on the island and Tesco is one of its main customers.

Speaking to *MTJ*, Isle of Man abattoir chief executive John Dawkins said: "The problem has been largely two-fold. Firstly Tesco was not satisfied with our documentation, but we have pretty well sorted that out now.

"The second thing we have to do is to replace two of the metal detectors. The ones we have now do not automatically discharge into a locked cabinet. The new machines we have should arrive soon. After that, we will have another audit with Tesco.

"However, I would like to assure customers that there has never been a problem with the standard of the meat or the hygiene at the plant."