Thailand

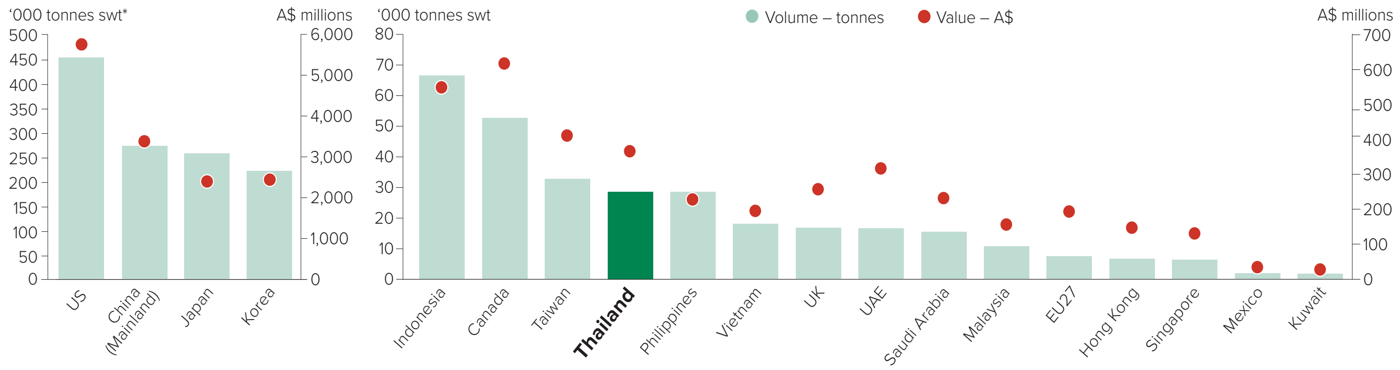
MARKET SNAPSHOT | BEEF & SHEEPMEAT

EXPORTS
Growing demand for high value chilled beef

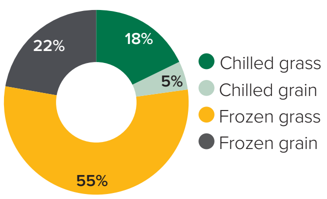
CONSUMERS
Rising incomes and appreciation for quality beef among urban locals

GROWTH
Well-established mid- and high-end foodservice for locals and tourists

Australian beef exports to Thailand in a global context [1 and 2]

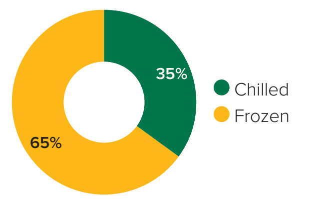


Australian beef exports – volume[1]



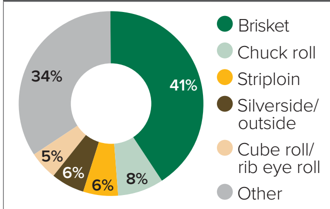
Total 28,656 tonnes swt

Australian beef exports – value[2]

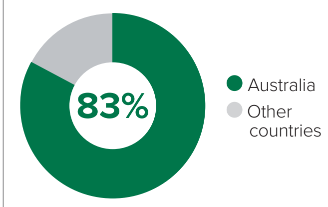


Total A$366 million

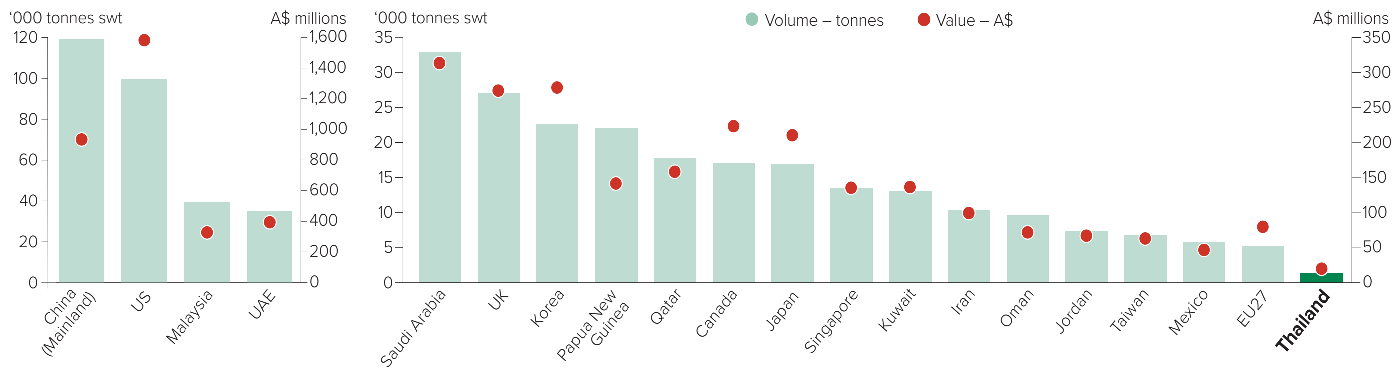
Australian beef exports by cut[1]



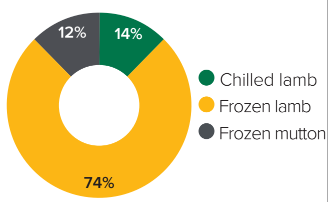
Australia's volume share of beef imports[2]



Australian sheepmeat exports to Thailand in a global context [1 and 2]

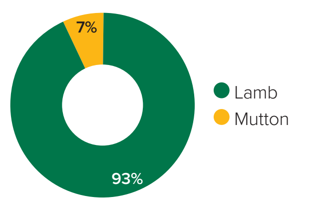


Australian sheepmeat exports – volume[1]



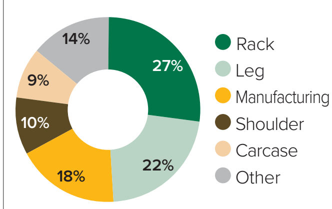
Total 1,223 tonnes swt

Australian sheepmeat exports – value[2]

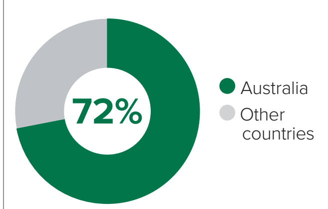


Total A$18 million

Australian sheepmeat exports by cut[1]



Australia's volume share of sheepmeat imports[2]



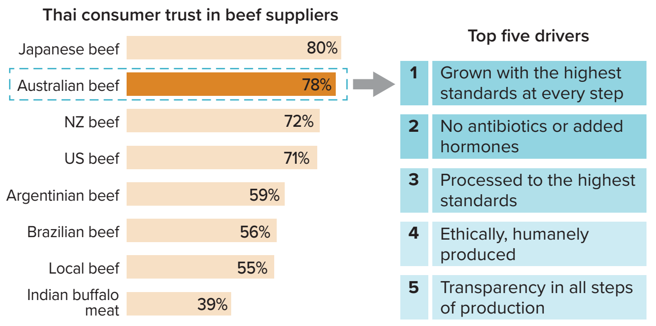
*Data source for charts: [1]Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) (2025), [2]Trade Data Monitor, LLC (TDM) (Moving Annual Total (MAT) November 2025), *swt = shipped weight*

Beef

CONSUMERS

- Thais enjoy the third highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in South-East Asia (SEA) behind Singapore and Malaysia and are forecast to have the second highest average consumer annual grocery spending at A$1,871 after Singapore in 2026 *(Source: IGD)*.
- As a significant regional poultry, fish and pork producer, these proteins naturally dominate Thai diets, being widely available and cheaper than other options. Beef is perceived as being a superior meat compared to others, with a delicious taste, making it the ideal meat for special occasions *(Source: MLA Global Consumer Tracker 2023)*.
- Thailand is well known for its own cuisine, developed over centuries, and is among the top drawcards for tourists. Beef is a prominent ingredient in Thai cuisine, particularly in popular dishes such as *pad krapow nue* (beef basil stir fry), *guay teow ruea* (boat noodles) and *panang nue* (beef curry). Hence, beef is a prominent protein in Thai consumers' minds. Bovine offal consumption is relatively low for the region but it is used in north eastern dishes in foodservice such as *tom krueng nai waua* (hot and sour beef tripe soup), *soy ju* (raw beef and offal with spicy and bitter sauce).
- Thais have a relatively high disposable income in the region which has been growing rapidly. This is underpinned by steadily increasing urbanisation which is supporting greater demand for higher value products such as Australian chilled beef. Total beef consumption is forecast to grow by 2.3% annually to 2029 *(Source: GIRA)*. With the largest share of Thailand's beef import suppliers, Australia is in a strong position to leverage new opportunities.
- Urban, higher-income Thai consumers increasingly seek high quality products and premium cuts such as ribeye and striploin. Rising focus on health has sparked greater interest in grassfed beef, especially among Gen Y and Gen X. While Millennials and Gen Z remain growth segments for imported, grainfed, highly marbled beef (including Wagyu), they are also particularly engaged when it comes to ethical sourcing and provenance.
- Cost of living pressures are still a major concern for Thais, with more than half worried about its impact on their household budgets *(Source: GlobalData Global Consumer Survey Q2 2025)*. As a result, more consumers are cooking meals at home more often than before. Despite the slow economy, retail and import sales of Australian beef continue to show strong demand. This presents opportunities for Australian beef, which is gaining popularity among those seeking high quality, versatile beef for a wide variety of home-cooked dishes.

Trust in beef by country of origin and drivers



Source: MLA Global Consumer Tracker 2023

FOODSERVICE

- Thailand has a large and well-established foodservice sector that serves the large volume of international tourist visitors alongside local diners, as well as growing numbers of domestic tourists.

Thailand international tourist arrivals and restaurants and hotels spending

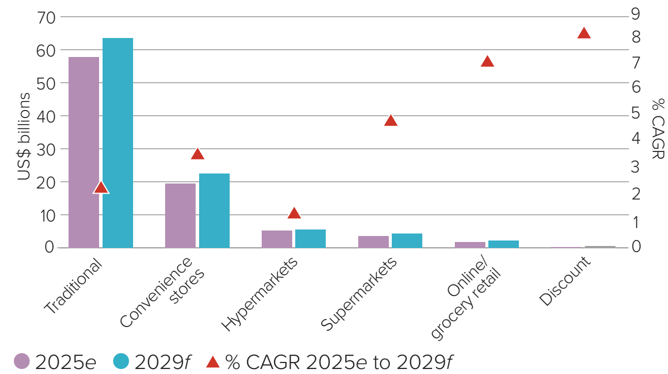
Source: Fitch Solutions, e = estimate, f = forecast

- Full-service restaurants continue to expand, driven by tourism recovery and diversification into retail, packaged meals and delivery. However, rising costs, cautious spending, and fierce competition challenge those slow to adapt.
- Tourism is a key driver of foodservice and beef consumption in Thailand and while visitor numbers have not quite recovered to pre-2019 levels, they are expected to reach 38 million tourists, generating US$73 billion in 2026 with most tourists from China (23%) and Malaysia (13%) *(Source: Fitch Solutions)*.
- Dining out is an important part of local culture and social life, especially among affluent and young Thais, particularly for Generation Z and young millennials (aged 18–35). These consumer segments seek new dining experiences such as trying new food trends, concepts and cuisines.
- International cuisines are increasingly popular, particularly Japanese and Korean, which feature high quality imported beef. Japanese BBQ and hotpot drive demand for Australian secondary cuts, while premium venues (steakhouses, five-star hotels, fine dining) offer marbled cuts like pillow and hanger steaks to entice consumers willing to pay more for specialty butcher cuts.
- Take-away services continue to grow, allowing restaurants to expand their reach. The fragmented nature of food outlets, increasing online connectivity, growing desire for healthy, multi-cuisine options amid busier lifestyles, including a rising proportion of women in the workforce, have all driven sustained demand for this service.
- Despite cost of living pressures, Thai consumers are seeking healthier lifestyles, including foods that offer health benefits. As families become wealthier and the ageing population increases, demand for quality, nutritious food is on the rise. Australian red meat is increasingly sought after due to consumer perceptions of its consistent and high quality *(Source: MLA Global Consumer Tracker 2023)*.

RETAIL

- Thailand's forecast total grocery retail sales are estimated to total US$87 billion in 2026. Similar to other regional counterparts, Thailand's retail channel is consists mainly of traditional small-scale independent players which still accounts for 66% of the total retail sector in 2026. However, the market has a relatively well-established modern retail segment and the largest in the region by sales value, characterised by a mix of convenience stores and hypermarkets *(Source: IGD)*.

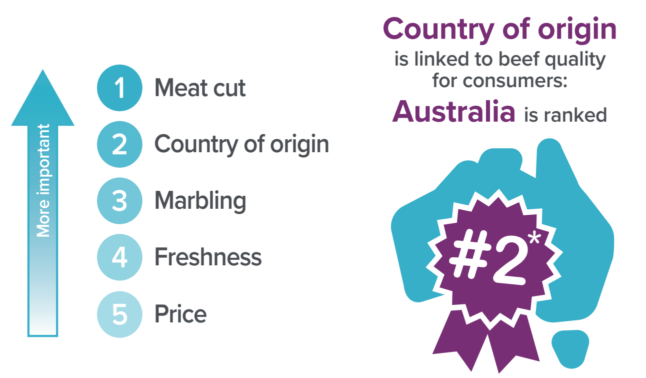
Thailand's total grocery retail sales and outlook



Source: IGD, CAGR = compound annual growth rate

- Modern retail growth is forecast to outpace traditional channels and gain market share in the coming years. Modern players are expanding their store networks to reach more consumers, many of whom prefer to do grocery shopping at smaller stores closer to home.
- Recent years have seen increased demand for chilled beef, driven by consumers preparing more meals at home. This has presented new opportunities for Australia as Thailand's largest supplier of high quality chilled beef.
- Modern retailers have been adapting their business models by developing and expanding their wholesale capabilities. Key players are now supplying smaller stores, hotels and foodservice venues that previously used more traditional channels looking for freshness. This growing trend highlights a gradual shift to higher demand for quality, safe products that require a more advanced cold chain.
- Health-conscious consumers are driving demand for premium beef. About half have purchased grassfed or organic beef, valued for naturalness and safety *(Source: Global Consumer Tracker 2023)*. Additionally, 51% link home-cooked meals to healthier living *(Source: Mintel)*, boosting retail demand for Australian chilled beef.

Most important factors when buying beef to eat at home

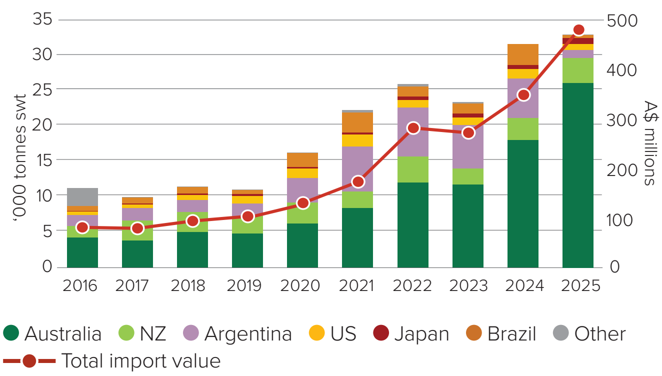


*Source: MLA SEA Traceability Research 2024, *After Japan*

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

- Thailand has a significant cattle herd, supplying the domestic market and a small export trade with neighbouring countries. Despite government efforts, however, productivity remains low and the production–consumption gap has continued to widen.
- Beef imported by Thailand accounts for just over 20% of local consumption, a relatively small proportion by regional standards. However, imported beef plays a bigger role in meeting the growing demand for high quality beef.
- Australia is Thailand's top beef supplier, growing its market share from 38% to 79% over the past decade. Exports hit a record 32,931 tonnes swt (A$380m) in the year to September 2025, driven by chilled beef, which accounted for 99% of Thailand's total chilled beef import volume. Thailand is Australia's largest chilled beef market in SEA, taking 6,155 tonnes swt in the same period. Chilled beef contributed 38% of export value and achieved the second-highest unit value in SEA, 82% above the regional average.
- Australia and New Zealand (NZ) benefit from zero tariffs under the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA, giving them a competitive edge over the United States (US), Argentina, and Brazil, which face 50% tariffs.
- While Argentina and Brazil showed growing momentum in past few years with Brazil surpassing the US and Japan in frozen boneless beef exports and Argentina maintaining a niche in offal and secondary cuts. However, imports from both ceased in 2025 following Thailand's suspension of market access under sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures linked to Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) risk management.
- US exports to Thailand fell 35% year-on-year. Discussions on reciprocal tariff agreements with Thailand may improve competitiveness if implemented in early 2026; details remain under negotiation.
- Japanese beef enjoys high awareness among Thais as the most superior beef, occupying a small premium niche, particularly in Japanese cuisine restaurants. From a low base, Japanese beef has increased its presence in the market, reaching 828 tonnes swt in the 12 months ending September 2025. This small volume represents just 3% of the total volume imported but 11% of the value, indicative of the demand for high value products in Thailand.

Thailand beef imports by supplier*



*Source: TDM, *MAT year ending September*

Sheepmeat

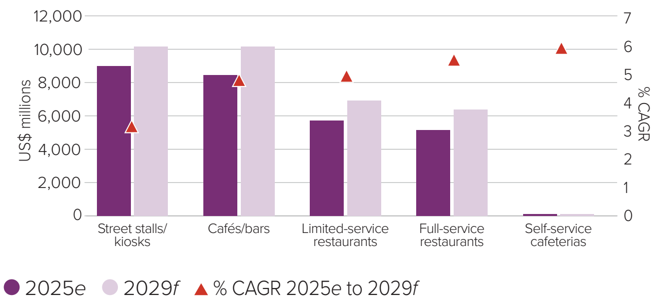
CONSUMERS

- As a niche protein, sheepmeat in Thailand is typically consumed on special family occasions and mainly in foodservice venues.
- Although consumption has been relatively low and stable for some years, it is projected to increase at a CAGR of 2.2% from 2024 to 2029 *(Source: GIRA)*. This is driven by the rebound in international tourism and the growing population of affluent, urban consumers seeking a wider variety of proteins in terms of taste, nutrition and cuisine.
- Thailand has relatively small domestic sheep and goatmeat production, meeting about half the market's consumption requirements *(Source: GIRA)*. Thais tend to choose local and imported products for different reasons, with imported products often preferred for their quality and trust *(Source: MLA Global Consumer Tracker 2023)*.
- Tenderness, high quality and superiority are the key attributes Thais associate with lamb which they believe make it a protein worth paying a premium for *(Source: MLA Global Consumer Tracker 2023)*.
- For Thai consumers, Australian lamb is positively associated with superiority and having consistently high quality standards, while Australia's production system is positively linked with good animal welfare.

FOODSERVICE

- Foodservice is the key channel for sheepmeat consumption in Thailand, as most consumers either do not know how to prepare it or find it difficult to cook at home. The vast majority of Australian sheepmeat exported to Thailand is utilised in the foodservice sector.
- Recovery of both international tourism and domestic dining out are sustaining the growth in demand for lamb in foodservice.
- Takeaway and meal delivery, along with ready meals, remain growth opportunities in the market despite the resumption of dine-in services.

Foodservice segment value and growth

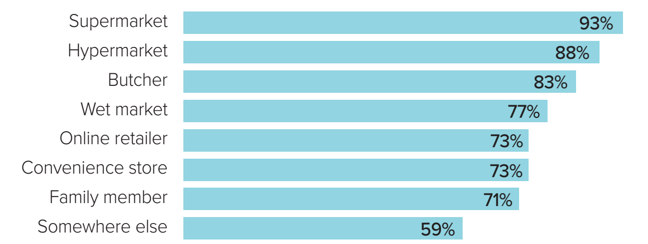


Source: Euromonitor International, Limited-service Restaurant (fast food + 100% home delivery/takeaway outlets)

RETAIL

- A relatively small proportion of sheepmeat is sold through Thai retail compared to foodservice. However, as consumers shift towards more home cooking to manage rising living costs, more Thais are experimenting with cooking lamb at home, leading to increased familiarity and knowledge of the product.
- Consumers don't purchase lamb primarily due to lack of familiarity (38%) and cooking knowledge (38%). However, the rising demand for easy, convenient meal solutions in retail represents opportunities for lamb to target curious consumers and encourage trial *(Source: MLA Global Consumer Tracker 2023)*.

Where shoppers purchase* lamb

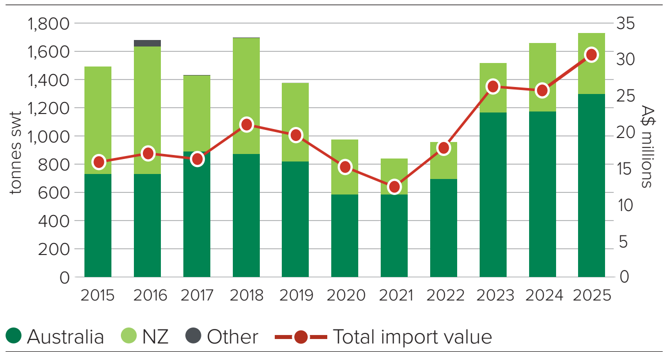


*Source: MLA Global Consumer Tracker 2023, *Purchased at least once a month*

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

- Thailand's domestic sheep production is relatively small. The demand for imported sheepmeat is primarily driven by the high-end foodservice sector.
- While FY24 saw softer demand for Thailand's sheepmeat imports, demand has rebounded in FY25 to reach 1,318 tonnes swt, surpassing the record volume of FY23. Australia is the top sheepmeat supplier, accounting for a volume share of 72% in FY25. New Zealand is the second largest, comprising 28% of import volume, while smaller volumes are imported from the United Kingdom (UK).

Thailand sheepmeat imports by supplier*



*Source: TDM, *MAT year ending September*

Beef

Market access overview – beef

Trade agreements	Import tariffs	Competitors	Volume restrictions	Technical access
ASEAN – Australia New Zealand Free Trade Agreement **(AANZFTA)** Thailand – Australia Free Trade Agreement **(TAFTA)**	Under **AANZFTA:** 0% for all product lines	**New Zealand:** Same access as Australia **Japan:** Zero tariff under JTEPA **US, Argentina, Brazil:** No FTA, tariff 50%	Zero	No major hurdles

Best access — Major challenges

Source: Trade agreements, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), World Trade Organization (WTO)

Sheepmeat

Market access overview – sheepmeat

Trade agreements	Import tariffs	Competitors	Volume restrictions	Technical access
ASEAN – Australia New Zealand Free Trade Agreement **(AANZFTA)** Thailand – Australia Free Trade Agreement **(TAFTA)**	Under **AANZFTA:** 0% for all product lines	**New Zealand:** Same access as Australia **UK:** No FTA, tariff 30%	Zero	No major hurdles

Best access — Major challenges

Source: Trade agreements, DFAT, WTO