

U.S. Files Complaint Against Chinese Chicken Tariffs

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- The United States filed a complaint Tuesday with the World Trade Organization that says China violated international trade rules when it imposed tariffs last year on U.S. chicken exports.

U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk said the tariffs threaten 300,000 jobs in the U.S. poultry industry. The tariffs ranged from 50 to 100 percent, a U.S. trade official said. That means some Chinese importers paid as much as twice the price for U.S. chicken.

The case is one of several that U.S. trade officials have filed against China this year at the WTO. The United States has also filed complaints about Chinese tariffs on steel products and its subsidies of wind power equipment.

"The United States does not arbitrarily seek disagreements with China," Kirk said. "However, we will not stand still if we believe that China has violated its commitments as a WTO member and is therefore threatening American jobs."

China imposed the tariffs in September 2010. It said U.S. chicken producers benefited from subsidies and were exporting their goods to China at unfairly low prices. Countries are allowed to impose punitive tariffs to offset both practices, but U.S. officials said China didn't follow proper procedures when it imposed them.

The U.S. was the largest exporter of chicken parts to China before the tariffs were imposed. Since then, exports have dropped 90 percent, trade officials said. That's expected to cost U.S. exporters \$1 billion by the end of this year.

Once a country files a trade complaint, the two nations negotiate for 60 days. If they are unable to reach agreement, the WTO launches its dispute settlement proceedings.

It generally takes about 18 to 24 months for the WTO to resolve a trade dispute.

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