

《美国商务部长希望明年1月初完成NAFTA重谈》

US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has said the best window to complete the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is by early January, well before Mexico's general elections and US congressional elections in 2018.

Speaking at an event held at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington think tank, Ross also said that the Commerce Department would impose anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties on Mexican sugar and Canadian softwood lumber if negotiated settlements in those trade disputes could not be reached. The deadline for a Mexican sugar deal is June 5.

Ross said he hopes that the sugar and lumber issues can be resolved before negotiations with Canada and Mexico to modernize NAFTA can be resolved. US sugar producers have sought the duties against Mexican competitors, arguing that Mexican government subsidies for the industry are unfair.



Workers load a truck with sugarcane in a field in Mexico on May 18, 2017. /VCG Photo

US lumber producers argue that Canadian competitors are also unfairly subsidized because their timber comes from government-owned land.

NAFTA negotiations cannot formally start until around August 16, when a consultation period with US lawmakers, industry and the public ends.

Ross said that he was hoping to start the talks sooner, but added that completing negotiations by January was important because Mexican elections could interfere with legislative approval of the agreement.

"Their elections are mid-year. The closer you get to it the more complicated it would become, particularly in terms of getting Mexican congressional approval," Ross said.

He also noted that the current "fast-track" negotiating authority in the US Congress needs to be reconfirmed in July 2018, while the US congressional mid-term elections in November 2018 will be looming large by then as well.

"Those will undoubtedly have some impact on congressional views," Ross said.

(Source: Reuters)

