

Largest beef-producing nations reach consensus on priorities

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) hosts the Five Nations Beef Conference in California.

On Oct. 4-5, 2001, at the Five Nations Beef Conference, the world's largest beef-producing nations discussed — and reached a consensus on — a variety of issues affecting beef and the beef supply.

Attending the conference were officers and representatives of the beef producer associations of Australia, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States. Through roundtable discussion, attendees developed a position statement (see accompanying sidebar) covering trade reform; animal identification; environment; animal health, welfare and disease control; promotion, product quality and food safety; and advanced technologies, said the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), who served as host of the conference.

"All the participants agree on the importance of a safe beef supply and free trade," said NCBA President Lynn Cornwell, a cattle producer from Glasgow, Mont. "At the Five Nations Beef Conference, we try to

translate that belief into a strategy to benefit all beef producers."

Trade reform

The key goal for the five nations in the next round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations is expanded participation in the WTO's elimination of all in-quota duties and tariffs, elimination of all export subsidies and export credit guarantees, substantial reductions in trade and production-distorting domestic subsidies, and elimination of technical barriers inconsistent with WTO guidelines and sound science.

"A science-based system is the only viable structure within which to evaluate trade issues," said Meat New Zealand President Tim Brittain. "By meeting face-to-face and discussing our experiences, we gain greater understanding of the process each country undergoes when evaluating a new trade issue."

Animal identification

The five nations agreed to continue to share information and to collaborate on the development, testing and implementation of new technologies designed to assist productivity and efficiency. All the countries concur that animal identification (ID) systems can be an important tool, when used in conjunction with other measures, to support disease prevention efforts and quality control programs.

"In Canada, we have an animal identification program that complements disease prevention efforts," said Canadian Cattlemen's Association President John Morrison. "We shared information on our system at the Five Nations Beef Conference so that other countries can learn from our experience, and industry productivity and efficiency might be increased."

Environment

The five nations recognize the role of cattle producers as original stewards of the land and their responsibility to protect and enhance the environment. There are variations in each country's environmental concerns, but all the countries agreed on the positive contribution of the beef industry to the global environment and the importance of balance between environmental regulations and business interests.

"Our goal, as an industry, is science-based site-specific solutions," said Faith Burns, associate director of environmental affairs for NCBA. "Recognizing environmental differences is important in all issues — water quality, air quality, endangered species and invasive species."

Animal health, welfare and disease control

Recognizing that information sharing and collaboration helps avoid duplication and encourages rapid and consistent adoption of new technologies, the participants agreed to pursue application of beneficial technologies that promote animal health and welfare, quarantine, biotechnology, food safety and environmental guidelines.

"New technologies are emerging that can advance food safety, product quality and animal health," said Confederación Nacional Ganadera President Gustavo Torres Flores. "It is important that we share our discoveries with our trade partners — and support equivalency in quality standards and product descriptions."

Promotion

All the nations contribute to beef checkoff programs — and all agreed to explore joint initiatives to expand beef demand in emerging and growing markets, along with continuation and expansion of individual checkoff programs to build consumer demand.

"There was unanimous support at this year's conference for beef checkoff programs," Lynn Cornwell said. "Checkoff programs are the best way to build consumer demand."

Begun in 1983, the Five Nations Beef Conference meets every 18 months. The location rotates among the member organizations. Each country is assigned an area of responsibility and leads the discussion on that area at the conference. The next Five Nations Beef Conference will be in New Zealand in the spring of 2003.

For more information on the Five Nations Beef Conference, visit www.hill.beef.org/5nation.

Table 1: Officers and representatives of beef producer associations attending the 2001 Five Nations Beef Conference

Australia	Peter Milne, president, Cattle Council of Australia
Canada	John Morrison, president, Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Mexico	Gustavo Torres Flores, president Confederación Nacional Ganadera
New Zealand	Tim Brittain, president, Meat New Zealand
United States	Lynn Cornwell, president, National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Five Nations Beef Conference position statement

The national beef producer associations of the United States [National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA)], New Zealand (Meat New Zealand), Mexico (Confederación Nacional Ganadera), Canada (Canadian Cattlemen's Association) and Australia (Cattle Council of Australia) met on Oct. 4-5, 2001, for the Five Nations Beef Conference in Santa Barbara, Calif. Following are the agreed upon positions originating from the conference.

Overriding principle

To meet or exceed global consumers' expectations in respect to beef, while eliminating non-scientific and political trade restrictions for the benefit of all beef producers.

Priority — trade reform

The Five Nations continues to support further market liberalization as our key priority in the upcoming round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. We support continued progress in reducing production- and trade-distorting programs and in improving market access.

In committing to trade reform, the Five Nations group recognizes the merits of working together to develop an international strategy as a tool for ongoing political efforts to effect meaningful change. In-principle support for conducting a joint global beef research project (Magellan Project) was agreed upon at the 2000 Conference in Australia; this research will be finalized early in 2002.

The Five Nations continues to support unequivocally:

Market access

- ▶ Working together to expand participation in the WTO to include those countries willing to adopt WTO rules
- ▶ Seeking the maximum possible increase in minimum access commitments
- ▶ Pursuing elimination of all in-quota duties/tariffs
- ▶ Pursuing maximum possible expansion of quotas and reduction in tariffs
- ▶ Seeking clear and binding rules on the administration of tariff rate quotas (TRQs)
- ▶ Committing to the eventual phaseout of all tariffs in conjunction with achieving free and fair trade of beef around the world

Export subsidies

- ▶ Pursuing the elimination of all export subsidies and export credit guarantees
- ▶ Maintaining support for the continuation of the Andriessen Assurance, that the European Union (EU) will not export subsidized beef into specified Asian markets, until all EU export subsidies are eliminated

Domestic support

- ▶ Pursuing further substantial reductions in trade- and production-distorting domestic subsidies
- ▶ Supporting the elimination of the blue box, or category of payments to producers, linked to production of specific crops, which impose limits on output

Technical barriers to trade

- ▶ Pursuing the elimination of all technical barriers inconsistent with WTO guidelines and sound science

Sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS) rules

- ▶ Opposing moves within the upcoming WTO Round to renegotiate the existing SPS framework
- ▶ Ensuring that sound science remains the only basis for resolving SPS issues

Anti-dumping (AD) rules

- ▶ Ensuring that anti-dumping rules recognize that price cycles within importing and exporting countries are a normal market function of supply and demand
- ▶ Ensuring that the definition of "dumping" be restricted to predatory price discrimination

Other trade issues

- ▶ Ensuring that technical standards, approval of genetically enhanced organisms, product labeling and food safety requirements are based on internationally accepted science and are consistent with international trade obligations
- ▶ Ensuring that the WTO dispute settlement mechanism is strengthened to enforce prompt implementation of WTO decisions; this to include financial compensation for noncompliance

Animal identification

- ▶ Continuing to develop, and to encourage the adoption of, internationally compatible animal identification (ID) systems that satisfy global requirements, facilitate trade and offer enhanced feedback capability for producers
- ▶ Continuing to share information and to collaborate on the development, testing and implementation of new technologies to assist productivity and efficiency
- ▶ Supporting animal ID systems that enhance disease prevention and control programs

Environment

- ▶ Continuing to work together to convey the positive contribution of the beef industry to the global environment
- ▶ Maintaining opposition to unreasonable use of environmental factors in international trade negotiations for beef and the beef industry in general

Animal health, welfare and disease control

- ▶ Recognizing the dangers for the beef industry from potential willful spreading of animal diseases and supporting optimum forms of mitigation against such potential occurrences
- ▶ Maintaining and enhancing our respective countries' disease-free status by ensuring our governments and quarantine authorities maintain heightened vigilance to prevent introduction of exotic diseases
- ▶ Pursuing an adequate level of animal health resources, including veterinary resources, to enable rapid identification of, and rapid response to, any exotic disease incursion
- ▶ Ensuring that animal welfare codes are based on "Good Production Practices" guidelines

Promotion

- ▶ Unanimously supporting the continuation and expansion of beef checkoff programs to build consumer demand for beef through research, education and promotion
- ▶ Agreeing to cooperate in expanding beef demand in emerging and growing markets around the world and in exploring joint initiatives where possible

Product quality and food safety

- ▶ Continuing to encourage the ongoing development and application of technologies and systems, based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP)/International Organization for Standardization (ISO) principles and quality assurance, to advance food safety, product quality and animal health
- ▶ Supporting equivalence of quality standards and product descriptions

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Advanced technologies

- ▶ Pursuing the application of beneficial technologies to issues such as animal health and welfare, quarantine, biotechnology, food safety and environmental guidelines
- ▶ Continuing to share information and to collaborate where possible to avoid duplication and to encourage a more rapid and consistent adoption of new technologies

Actions

In cooperation with other group members, the Cattle Council of Australia is to finalize the development of a part-time secretariat. Issues to be covered include:

- ▶ funding, communications strategy and venue and frequency of conferences;
- ▶ the provision of a conference planning manual; and
- ▶ the establishment of a process for appropriate cooperative marketing and research and development activities for the benefit of all members.

Each of the Five Nations group members commits to providing the secretariat with \$1,200 (U.S.)/year for three years commencing July 1, 2001 (translation would need to be agreed upon first and would be an additional charge).

The Five Nations group agrees to:

- ▶ Promptly finalize a communications network that includes the capability for a coordinated crisis management response.
- ▶ Reappoint Five Nations conference working groups to develop strategies for increasing global beef demand; to continue to exchange relevant resources on promotion, nutrition, animal health and welfare, food safety, the environment, technological developments and other issues of international significance; and to be responsible for coordinating tasks as listed below:

Promotion and merchandising: New Zealand

Animal identification: Canada

Trade reform: New Zealand

Product quality and food safety: Mexico

Environment, animal welfare and disease control: United States

Advanced technology: Australia

The conference agrees to the next Five Nations meeting's being conducted in New Zealand, possibly in late February 2003. For the interim period, the working groups will proceed with activities as assigned above and report to the next Five Nations Beef Conference.

Additionally, the Five Nations group agrees to extend to the beef producers of Argentina and Uruguay an invitation to attend the next Five Nations Beef Conference and, if acceptable to all, to become full members.

