

2008

International Flavor

Conference provides attendees with information from around the world.

by *Mathew Elliott*

The 2008 International Livestock Congress (ILC) – USA was held in conjunction with this year's National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver. The Jan. 15 meeting allowed producers and industry representatives from across the United States to hear speakers from around the world.

Mark Gustafson, program co-chair and vice president of international sales for JBS Swift & Co., and Clint Peck, program co-chair and director of Montana Beef Quality Assurance, began the meeting by welcoming the attendees to the 2008 ILC. A very special welcome was given to Nolan Ryan of Nolan Ryan Guaranteed Tender. The Major League Baseball (MLB) Hall of

Fame pitcher attended the conference and served as the Grand Marshall of the NWSS cattle drive through downtown Denver.

The morning was broken into two sessions with panels to accompany the topics. The first was the "Global Beef Demand Panel." Comprised of five individuals from different parts of the world, the panel looked at international beef demand.

The second session, "Producing for the Global Market," also had five panelists and focused on beef supply around the world. (For more information on the panels, see page 205.)

During the Leadership Luncheon, another connection between baseball and

beef was made when Keli McGregor, president of the Colorado Rockies baseball club, spoke to the ILC attendees and scholarship winners. McGregor recalled his days working on a farm in Iowa and going to Colorado State University (CSU) to become a veterinarian before he became an All-American at CSU and played football in the National Football League (NFL).

McGregor spoke on leadership and how important it is to surround yourself with positive individuals so positive things will happen. McGregor used the Rockies MLB record-setting 21 wins in 22 games to illustrate his point.

The Student Travel Fellowship Winners were then announced. Twelve students from



PHOTOS BY MATHEW ELLIOTT

► ILC attendees listen to a presentation on international demand during the morning session.



►The global consumer demand panel spoke on international markets from Europe to Japan.

institutions from around the world were recognized for their scholarship achievements and leadership experiences. The ILC provided these students the opportunity to interact with world industry leaders.

The afternoon allowed attendees to choose from among two blocks of sessions. During Block A, attendees could attend two of three sessions that included “Impact of Biofuels/Ethanol Byproducts on Beef Quality,” “Supply Chain Management Strategies” and “Global Traceability.” Block B sessions included “Country-of-Origin Labeling” (sometimes referred to as COL or COOL), “Quality System Assessment (QSA) – Third Party Documentation” and “Challenges From Other Proteins.” (For more information on block sessions see the April 2008 *Angus Journal*.)

John Paterson, an Extension beef specialist at Montana State University, wrapped up the day by “stealing his slides” for the next year. Paterson highlighted some of the slides from various speakers that he thought provided the most important message to the audience.

After the wrap-up session, attendees loaded up to head back to the NWSS grounds for the Flavor of Beef Reception. Following the reception, ILC participants had the opportunity to go to the Professional Bull Riders Denver Chute Out Rodeo.



►Left: “There are two reasons why we do what we do — we like it and we make money,” said Miguel de Achavel, CEO Cactus Argentina.

►Below: Randy Blach, CattleFax, moderated the Producing for the Global Market response session.



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International Livestock Congress

Global beef opportunities explored at 2008 event in Denver.

Story & photos by **Mathew Elliott**

To better access the Japanese market, it's important to first understand the country's culture, said Joel Haggard of the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) for Asia-Pacific.

"Most importantly, the Japanese are wealthy, the majority of their population can afford our products," Haggard said. "They are well-educated and this [translates] to a direct desire to know more about the food that they consume. They are very tech-savvy and early adapters. The concepts of harmony, natural and healthy are key lifestyle choices for the Japanese, especially as the population ages."

With those factors in mind, Haggard spoke about how each one of those facts —

especially the healthful attributes of beef — drives their demand for beef. Along with health, Haggard mentioned the dichotomy with more women working.

"There's a demand for healthy, natural, organic products," Haggard said, "but at the same time, there is a premium being placed upon convenience and ready-to-eat foods."

To meet this consumer demand, Haggard said, Japanese consumers like to establish a relationship, or trust, with those producing and selling food to them. Thus, there is a key interest in traceability.

"The 'We Care' marketing campaign aims to rebuild Japanese consumer confidence in our beef by introducing them

to our producers," Haggard said. "Hence the 'We' of the 'We Care' statement."

Haggard said the campaign tries to put a human face on the U.S. product, but at the same time, it has also utilized celebrity endorsements, both by Japanese and recognizable U.S. athletes and celebrities. While using the endorsements, a continuous flow of U.S. beef into the supermarkets was recommended to increase awareness and visibility.

Korean Market. Haggard began explaining the Korean consumer by looking at the country's past. Once ruled by a dictator, Korea is now a democracy. "The power of the once controlled media has become very strong," Haggard said. "In this super-competitive media environment, sensationalism is ripe and often with nationalistic undertones."

This can cause issues, such as the safety of U.S. beef to become very "hot" for a while.

"It is very important for the U.S. to counter with a loud voice, while at the same time educating consumers on basic quality and safety issues," Haggard said.

However, continuous sensationalism and exposure in the news can be a bad thing, Haggard said. He also said that it is important for the Korean market to be made aware of basic food safety facts. Haggard suggested U.S. beef in Korea be practically priced. With beef comprising a large portion of Korean protein intake, Haggard said that, with the suggestions above, U.S. beef has a place in Korea.

Chinese market. China is developing its middle class, Haggard said. It has very few middle-class households.

"China has a goal to make half of its households 'middle class' by the year 2020," he explained. "It's going to happen mostly in the cities, so rural residents probably will



► The USMEF's Joel Haggard discussed opportunities for increasing beef exports to various countries.

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