

# Setting the PACE

by Susan Waters, director of communications and public relations



## We've got a LONG WAY TO GO

If your ear is to the ground on beef industry issues, I'm sure you've heard by now that demand for beef has finally stabilized, and it is starting to inch upward. There's no doubt this is good news for beef producers, and it finally gives all of us industry cheerleaders something about which to cheer. Our spirits have been low since the decline of beef consumption in America, which became evident back in the 1980s and seemed to be on a downward spiral ever since.

A number of people deserve a fair share of the credit for the improved demand for beef. Beef cattle producers are breeding better cattle with the use of improved genetics and technology. Identifying the cattle that combine production efficiency and the ability to produce a carcass that falls within the industry's target zone will be critical.

Industry alliances and packers are rewarding producers for this higher-quality product where it counts — in their pocketbooks. These premiums will continue to be the driving force behind beef production and will improve the producer's ability to make a profit in all phases of the cattle cycle.

Also contributing to these efforts are state and national beef industry organizations, who are on the right track with programs and services that enhance the producer's business and provide the tools and resources

needed to stay competitive in production agriculture. Now more than ever, these organizations will provide insight and leadership for the entire beef industry.

But most of all, beef producers are finally back in touch with the consumer. Today's consumers want to include beef in their families' diets and are willing to pay more for our product than ever before. We have our national beef checkoff to thank for this one.

Because of the checkoff dollars producers have invested over the years, the beef industry is finally on the right track toward satisfying consumer demands. The development of heat-and-serve products, medical and dietary research on the health and nutritional aspects of beef, and simply spreading the word about the benefits of including beef in a healthy diet are just some of the programs that are starting to pay off for beef producers. The beef industry is definitely headed in the right direction.

### The truth HURTS

But allow me to bring us back to reality for a moment. Even though demand for beef seems to be on an uphill trend, we still can't deny that beef producers have lost 14% of the market share they once enjoyed back in the mid-1970s. Yes, we're making progress, but in terms of increased demand for our product, we've got a long way to go before we hit the breakeven point again.

The only way to do this is to continue to support your state and national beef industry organizations, continue to support the beef checkoff, and most of all, continue to spread the good word about beef. With the help and teamwork of all beef producers, we can have a bigger effect on the protein business and propel beef's market share back to where it was — at the top.

### It's BEEF MONTH!

It's May, and that means it's time to celebrate Beef Month. Throughout this month, your state beef councils will be working hard to bring a positive message about beef to consumers. And since Memorial Day weekend is the official kickoff to grilling season, the timing couldn't be more perfect.

Take the opportunity this month to participate in a local or state Beef Month promotion. Now is a perfect time for you to be Setting the PACE!

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### The Last WORD...

"Ideas are funny things.  
They don't work unless you do."

— Unknown

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