

BEEF BUSINESS



Compiled by Julie Mais, editor

September's "Beef Business" brings you information on growing beef exports, new tools for disaster assistance and updates on the SNAP program.

Beef exports rise during June

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service released the latest "Livestock & Meat International Trade Data" update on Aug. 6, revealing another month of stellar beef shipments, while imports continued to struggle.

Exports, reported at 272.6 million lb., were a record large for June and were up 15.6% from the prior year. They also narrowly missed May's all-time export record by just 175,800 lb. (0.06% lower than May). Through the first half of 2018, exports totaled 1.53 billion lb., up 14.7% from the year before. While the year-over-year difference on beef exports is expected to narrow into the back half of the year, shipments are projected to be up about 10% from 2017.

Imports, reported at 291.2 million lb., jumped 5% from the prior month, but fell 1% from last year. While imports from Canada were up 10%, shipments from Australia were up 13%, with the pair of countries accounting for nearly 50% of June's import total.

Source: Feedstuffs

New Tools, Resources to Farmers.gov

Agricultural producers have new resources available to them to prepare for and recover from

impacts of natural disasters on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new website, *farmers.gov*. The site has updated tools and information to help agricultural producers identify the right programs and make decisions for their operations.

New additions to the site – being built for farmers, by farmers – include a *farmers.gov* portal for secure business transactions and a disaster assistance discovery tool. The discovery tool walks producers through five questions to help them identify personalized results of what USDA disaster assistance programs meet their needs. The *farmers.gov* portal is the first edition of a secure dashboard for producers to manage program applications and other USDA documents.

USDA's Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency are collaborating with partners in the government and private sector to build *farmers.gov*. Work began in fall 2017, and the site launched in 2018.

Source: USDA

SNAP participation dips

According to the latest data released by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, March 2018 national enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program (SNAP) dipped to the lowest level in eight years, at 40,083,954 participants. The last time enrollment was below this number was February 2010, at 39,588,993 participants. SNAP participation has been declining since its peak of 47,792,056 participants nationally in December 2012.

SNAP benefits are federally funded and tied to an individual's level of need, and all individuals who meet eligibility requirements are entitled to participate in the program. In the three years leading up to the 2007-2009 recession, SNAP enrollment had held somewhat steady at approximately 26 million participants. Fiscal year 2013 saw an annual average of 47.6 million participants in SNAP. There is a high level of consensus that a declining economy is the significant driver behind this increase, with other factors including changes in SNAP policies affecting participation rates.

Preceding this 75% increase in participation between fiscal year 2007 and fiscal year 2013 was a more than doubling of the unemployment rate, from 4.6% in 2007 to a peak of 9.6% in 2010. SNAP participation changes tend to lag the unemployment rate.

Since 2013, the national unemployment rate has dramatically declined to 4.4% in 2017, the lowest

annual average unemployment rate since 2000. Following this decline in unemployment was a decrease in the SNAP participation rate of over 5.5 million people, a decline of 12%.

Following improvements in the national economy, fewer Americans are participating in SNAP today than they were eight years ago. SNAP participation is trending downward at a national level from the peak enrollment in 2013 in all but three states. Accompanying this decline in participation is a decrease in federal government spending levels. According to USDA's FNS data, in fiscal year 2017 SNAP cost nearly \$12 billion less than it did in fiscal year 2013. Additionally, after a sharp increase during the financial crisis, monthly average benefits per person have moderated and declined 5% since 2013.

Source: American Farm Bureau Federation

U.S. weather highlight

During July, Midwestern growing conditions overall remained mostly favorable, despite pockets of drought in Michigan, Missouri and portions of neighboring states. Across much of the central and eastern U.S., a late-month cooling trend benefited reproductive to filling summer crops, especially in areas with adequate soil moisture.

East of the Rockies, the largest area of drought generally stretched from Texas into parts of the middle and lower Mississippi Valley. Much of Texas and environs also endured a protracted heat wave, beginning around mid-month (July-August) and lasting for more than a week.

In contrast, regular Southeastern showers benefited pastures and a variety of summer crops. However, too much rain fell in parts of the East, leading to flash flooding, fieldwork delays, and crop-quality concerns.

Elsewhere, hot, dry weather

dominated California and the Northwest, while scattered showers related to the monsoon circulation dotted the southern Great Basin and the Southwest. The Southwestern showers provided only limited drought relief but curbed the wildfire threat. Conversely, dozens of wildfires across the remainder of the West resulted in locally significant losses of timber, rangeland and crops such as winter wheat.

Source: USDA

Traceability pilot program

A pilot program, Cattle Trace, is a public-private partnership which will develop and test a purpose-built cattle disease traceability infrastructure in Kansas that will guide discussion and development of traceability on a national scale.

Cattle disease traceability is an important component in the overall biosecurity of the U.S. beef cattle industry, playing a significant role in resuming and maintaining commerce in the event of a disease outbreak.

Cattle Trace is a collaborative partnership between Kansas State University, the Kansas Livestock Association, the Kansas Department of Agriculture, USDA and individual producer stakeholders. It is being jointly funded by public and private resources.

In early 2018, Cattle Trace collaborators began developing a purpose-built infrastructure to track cattle movement through the supply chain. Cattle Trace will utilize ultra-high frequency technologies to collect the minimal data necessary, including an individual animal identification number, a GPS location, and date and time, in order to track animals in the event of a disease outbreak. For more information visit cattletrace.org.

Source: Kansas Department of Agriculture

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