

Part celebration, part innovation:

CAB annual conference brings all links together

by Miranda Reiman, Certified Angus Beef, LLC

Filling bunks is to the cattle feeder as restocking a meat case is to the retailer. It has to get done every morning, on schedule. Both jobs require dependability.

Processing day is to the rancher as a busy Friday night on the line is to a chef — a bit hectic. When the work is over, it's fulfilling, a job well done.

Parallels like that run through the supply chain, and when more than 700 gathered for the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand's annual conference, they got to meet face to face and talk about them firsthand.

"To be a part of a community inherently means we're part of something bigger than ourselves," says John Stika, CAB president. "The more intentional we are in understanding the unique realities of all of us who comprise it, the more effectively we can support each other and the stronger our community will be."

Attendees from 43 states and 18 countries, representing all parts of

the beef chain, attended the event, Sept. 26 to 28, in Maui, Hawaii.

Stika thanked the brand partners for selling 1.21 billion pounds (lb.) of CAB in the 2018 fiscal year.



"What you all have achieved together, 14 years of consecutive growth ... Unbelievable, wasn't it?" says Randy Blach, CattleFax CEO, giving the market overview. "To see a 7-million-head reduction in the number of high-quality fed animals that are harvested and you see 14 years of consecutive growth, that tells you you're doing the right thing, doesn't it?"

Supply will be strong going

forward, he says, but cattlemen should look to the economic signals that say, "Don't let up."

"Production has gone up that much and demand didn't collapse," Blach says, noting the \$20-per-hundredweight CAB premium over Select the past two years. "People want what you're producing. They're willing to pay for it."

Committing to creativity

With the increased tonnage comes both opportunity and a burden on stakeholders to get creative in their sales approach.

On the island, an oceanside rotisserie spit featured an entire side of beef. CAB corporate chefs roasted it over open coals all day, while passersby stopped, took pictures and asked questions.

That was just an illustration of the beef innovation that happens in CAB headquarters and at licensees across the world all year long.



Hungry crowds were "wowed." Seven executive chefs and 25 cooks kept beef at the center of the plate and the center of attention throughout the event.



Three collegians shared about growing up in production agriculture. The motivated audience raised a record \$143,450 for the Colvin Scholarship Fund later that evening.

Tracey Erickson, CAB vice president of marketing, unveiled a new Japanese website and the first release of the “Rare Moments Done Well,” TV commercial running in targeted markets on Prime Time.

She emphasized that digital space is important to occupy, but relationships will always be the key to brand marketing.

“We don’t ever want to be a virtual brand without people,” Erickson says.

Sessions focused on how to build beef sales, starting with being better at business.

Chris Hogan, former college football standout now working with finance and life coach Dave Ramsey, focused on how to strengthen teams.

“What are you doing to make sure your rock stars know that they matter?” he asked, noting it’s in the details. Show you care by asking these three questions: “How are you? What are you working on? How can I help?”

He says, “A good leader can help someone get better at their job. A great leader can help someone get better at their life.”

Breakouts took a deeper dive into challenges and opportunities, by business type, from capitalizing on

Prime availability to using mobile-device trends for an advantage.

Communicating cattle care

Restaurateurs heard from Mark McCully, CAB vice president of production, who says, “Sustainability is not a new thing.”

He shared examples that put science in perspective, and explained how farmers and ranchers protect their resources and add value to marginal land.

“The most effective use for that is what we’re using it for: grazing it with cattle,” McCully says.

Cattle care was a topic as three college students took the stage. Michael Cropp and Elisabeth Forker, both CAB Colvin Scholarship winners, and Sydni Lienemann, 2018 Angus Ambassador, took questions from the crowd about growing up in the beef business and their future plans.

“I really value the closeness that I have with my family because we work with each other day in and day out to raise the cattle the best we can,” Lienemann says.

The panelists gave a personal face to production agriculture, from stories of the Lienemann kids “selling” their dog named Angus in pretend living-

room bull sales to Forker’s Christmas morning blizzard memories at her family’s Loseke Feedyard.

“My mom always says, ‘Nobody’s making us do it.’ We want to do it and so we appreciate you guys that are all out there selling our product,” Forker says. “Not only has the scholarship helped me, but you guys selling our product and being advocates yourselves has helped me further my career and education.”

Forker and her husband are currently feeding a pen of cattle with her parents.

“That CAB-Choice spread that Randy [Blach] was talking about earlier? That’s been funding my education, because of you.”

Looking back, looking forward

But that narrative was different when the brand started 40 years ago. Stika talked about the hard times and humble beginnings.

“I think we would all agree it hasn’t always been like it is today, has it? To be an Angus breeder or a quality-minded participant in the beef industry,” Stika says, recalling trials like USDA’s cancellation of the program or the narrow 8 to 7 board vote that kept the then-fledgling brand afloat.

Baseball legend Jim Abbott talked about beating the odds and shared inspiration. “The first thing we can ignore is somebody else’s opinion of what is possible.”

Looking to the next 40 years, CAB leadership plans to take that to heart.

“Our goal remains to become a stronger, more innovative brand partner that delivers creative, innovative, impactful marketing elements that drive demand and increase your business,” Stika says. **AJ**