



# Beef Business

► A look at current issues affecting the cattle industry. Compiled by **Shelby Mettlen**, assistant editor

## Anti-GMO-labeling bill stalls in the Senate

On March 16 the U.S. Senate failed to reach a 60-vote threshold to proceed on Sen. Pat Roberts' (R-KS) Biotech Labeling Solutions Act, which would put in place a voluntary labeling system and pre-empt states from enacting GMO labeling laws.

"Today's vote marked an important milestone for the more than 90% of Americans who want GMOs to be labeled," said Tom Colicchio, Food Policy Action co-founder and chef, calling the measure the "Deny Americans the Right to Know (DARK)" Act. "I am hopeful that the Senate will now work to craft a bipartisan mandatory on-pack GMO labeling bill that doesn't demonize science and gives consumers the information they demand."

Colicchio and Food Policy Action delivered a letter to the Senate signed by more than 4,000 chefs asking their senators to reject the proposed measure and support mandatory labeling of GMO foods.

Chuck Connor, president of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC) called the vote deeply disturbing.

"The legislation would have helped avoid a costly patchwork of state labeling laws, increased the information about food available to consumers, and given farmers some certainty as they make future planting decisions," Connor said. "Despite the outcome today, this issue and the need to resolve it will not go away. There continues to be ongoing discussions with senators from both sides of the aisle on finding a compromise that can achieve broad-based Senate support."

Inexcusable was the word American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) President Zippy Duvall used to describe the vote, pledging to continue fighting to "secure a law that supports consumers, America's farmers and ranchers, and our nation's system of affordable, productive agriculture."

Said Duvall, "To say we are angry with those senators who abandoned farmers and ranchers and turned their backs on rural America on this vote is an understatement. Their votes opposing this measure ignored science, threw our nation's food system into disarray and undermined the public's understanding of the many benefits of biotechnology in feeding a growing and

hungry population. We remain hopeful they will have a chance at redemption by correcting this situation that will otherwise lead to increased food costs for consumers and stifle agricultural innovation, which remains a strength of our nation."

*Source: Food Policy Action, NCFC and AFBF.*

## United States secures full access for U.S. beef and beef products to Peru

Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman announced March 14 that the U.S. government reached agreement with the government of Peru to remove barriers for U.S. beef exports to Peru that have remained in effect since 2003, opening one of the fastest-growing markets in Latin America to all American beef and beef products.

In 2015, the United States exported \$25.4 million in beef and beef products to Peru. Since the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA) entered into force in 2009, U.S. beef and beef products have grown substantially, but have been hampered due to burdensome certification requirements installed by Peru in 2003. The agreement removes those barriers and assures American ranchers of expanded market access.

The agreement reflects the United States' negligible risk classification for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). Through an exchange of letters, the United States and Peru have agreed to changes in certification statements that will allow beef and beef products from all federally inspected U.S. establishments to be eligible for export to Peru, rather than only those beef and beef products from establishments that participated in the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Export Verification (EV) programs under the previous certification requirements.

*Source: USDA.*

## House Ag Committee hosts second two-day review of USDA agencies

On March 17, the Committee on Agriculture began Part I of a two-day hearing series examining USDA organization and program administration. USDA officials from the Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services (FNCS), Food Safety (FS), and Rural

Development (RD) mission areas served as witnesses.

This hearing series follows a similar series the committee hosted with USDA last fall. By setting aside two days each year to focus on examining each of USDA's seven mission areas and their respective agencies, members of the committee gain a fuller understanding of how the various parts of USDA work together to achieve the department's purpose and goals.

"As we come closer to writing the next Farm Bill, it is imperative that committee members have a thorough knowledge of each of USDA's agencies and the important work they do," said Conaway. "Beyond gaining a better understanding of USDA's structure, I hope that through this hearing we can highlight the areas where things are working well, identify areas where there could be improvements, and look for ways we can better work together for rural America."

For more information, including Conaway's opening statement, and the archived webcast, visit <http://agriculture.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=3202>.

*Source: House Committee on Agriculture.*

## Funding available for breakthrough technologies for plant, animal phenomics and microbiomes

On March 18, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO) announced \$6 million in available funding to support the development of transformative plant and animal phenomics and microbiome technologies.

This USDA-NIFA, NSF-BIO Joint Activity is soliciting Early Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) proposals that address the development of innovative approaches for phenotyping and microbiome characterizations, as well as for elucidating the role of microbiomes in plants and animals. This activity addresses critical gaps in tools available for characterizing plant and animal phenotypes and microbiomes, in part to more fully realize the potential of low-cost high throughput sequencing and genotyping technologies.

Proposed studies should be potentially transformative and may be considered "high-

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risk, high-payoff,” and be compatible with the budget and time limits (\$300,000, two years) of the EAGER funding mechanism.

*Source: USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.*

### January-March market update

A report released on March 24 by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Agricultural Statistics Board, outlined the January-February market activity for animal protein.

Commercial red meat production for the United States totaled 3.9 billion pounds (lb.) in February, up 5% from the 3.73 billion lb. produced in February 2015.

Beef production, at 1.89 billion lb., was 7% above the previous year. Cattle slaughter

totaled 2.29 million head, up 5% from February 2015. The average live weight was up 17 lb. from the previous year, at 1,372 lb.

Veal production totaled 6.1 million lb., 3% below February a year ago. Calf slaughter totaled 36,500 head, down 1% from February 2015. The average live weight was down 6 lb. from last year, at 287 lb.

Pork production totaled 2.00 billion lb., up 3% from the previous year. Hog slaughter totaled 9.43 million head, up 4% from February 2015. The average live weight was down 2 lb. from the previous year, at 283 lb. Lamb and mutton production, at 12.5 million lb., was up 8% from February 2015. Sheep slaughter totaled 175,800 head, 7% above last year. The average live weight was 142 lb., up 1 lb. from February a year ago.

January to February 2016 commercial red meat production was 8 billion lb., up 2% from 2015. Accumulated beef production was

up 3% from last year, veal was down 2%, pork was up 1% from last year, and lamb/mutton production was up 2%.

*Source: USDA NASS.*

### Forbes names Zoetis one of America's best employers

Zoetis Inc. announced March 23 that it has been named one of America's Best Midsize Employers in 2016 by *Forbes* magazine. Zoetis is the only pharmaceutical company focused solely on animal health to make the list. It is ranked 81st out of 250 mid-size companies.

“This honor is a terrific recognition of the workplace, culture and brand we have built at Zoetis since becoming an independent company in 2013,” said Roxanne Lagano, executive vice president and chief human resources officer at Zoetis. “Over the past three years, we have tried to create a supportive and flexible culture based on our

colleagues living our core beliefs. That culture has contributed to the success and growth of our company, and we are especially proud that our colleagues and others are recommending Zoetis as a great employer.”

*Forbes* determined its America’s Best Employers list based on an independent survey among a sample of 30,000 American employees working for large and mid-size companies and institutions. The willingness to recommend one’s own employer was used as the most important factor in the assessment. The employees were consulted anonymously through online access panels. Visit [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com) to see the entire list of America’s Best Employers for 2016.

*Source: Zoetis.*

### **Animal ag continues to add meat to national economy**

The animals that feed us are also feeding

our economy, according to a new soy-checkoff-funded study. The analysis shows animal ag, U.S. soy’s top end user, increased gross national product by \$123 billion in economic output, improved household earnings by more than \$21 billion and added 645,629 jobs from 2004-2014.

According to the Economic Analysis of Animal Agriculture, during 2014 alone, U.S. animal agriculture’s support of the national economy included:

- ▶ \$440.7 billion in economic output
- ▶ 2,363,477 jobs
- ▶ \$76.7 billion in earnings
- ▶ \$19.6 billion in income taxes

Those figures all increased from 2013.

“The fact that our animal ag sector is growing is very beneficial for U.S. soybean farmers,” says Mike Beard, a soy checkoff farmer-leader who grows soybeans and raises hogs on his farm in Frankfort, Ind. “With

97% of soybean meal going to animal ag, the strength of poultry and livestock production are incredibly important to the U.S. soybean industry.”

During 2014, U.S. animal agriculture consumed an estimated 27.9 million tons of soybean meal, or the meal from about 1.2 billion bushels (bu.) of U.S. soybeans. This soybean meal was fed primarily to broilers (464 million bu.), hogs (327 million bu.) and dairy cows (112 million bu.).

The report concluded that U.S. soybean farmers shouldn’t let their support for the animal ag industry weaken. Poultry and livestock farmers face many pressures, which also threaten the profitability of all soybean farmers.

For more information on the United Soybean Board, visit [www.unitedsoybean.org](http://www.unitedsoybean.org).

*Source: United Soybean Board.*

