

# Beef Checkoff Provides Updates

by **Shelby Mettlen**, assistant editor



The National Beef Checkoff Program shared updates from many of its contractors with producers and beef industry leaders during the Cattle Industry Annual Convention in San Diego.

**Long-Range Plan Task Force.** Don Schiefelbein, co-chairman of the Long-Range Plan Task Force shared the success of the Long-Range Plan, noting many of the goals have been met or exceeded.

The image of beef is actually getting better, he added, but there's always room for the beef industry to improve its communication to consumers. Acknowledging that those who wear cowboy hats tend to be very independent, he emphasized, "It's very important to listen to the other 98%."

Schiefelbein shared an analogy coined by his daughter to help illustrate what it's like for consumers trying to understand where their beef comes from.

"When they are in the dark, what do they

see?" she asked. "They see the boogeyman. Everything they hear must be bad."

So, what's the quickest way to eliminate the boogeyman? Turn on the light.

"As an industry, we have got to be willing to turn on the light," he said.

Schiefelbein said beef producers can't be worried about privacy. We have to promote and strengthen beef's value. That's his goal for the Long-Range Plan in 2016.

## **U.S. Meet Export Federation (USMEF).**

Greg Hanes, USMEF assistant vice president for international marketing and programs, said U.S. beef production is increasing as Australia's market contracts due to drought. To displace the competition in the Japanese markets, the USMEF is developing new cuts and recipes to share with Japanese consumers.

A survey published in the *Nikkei Marketing Journal* in Japan revealed that U.S. beef ranked No. 5 out of 35 beef brands surveyed by consumers based on 16 questions about taste, safety and marketing. U.S. beef was No. 1 for public relations and customer service.

Hanes noted that U.S. beef is recapturing share in the export market, and that this could have huge impacts for U.S. beef producers.

**Cattlemen's Beef Board.** Lynne Heinze spoke on behalf of the Cattlemen's Beef Board, highlighting producer communication in the beef industry. Social media followers of @mybeefcheckoff are up 81%, consumer reach is up 119% and engagement is up 314%.

**Meat Import Council of America.** Director of Promotions Jennifer Orr shared updates for the Meat Import Council of America.

Orr said one of the most prominent goals of 2015 and 2016 is to engage in deeper, more meaningful relationships with consumers. The Meat Import Council focuses its attention on consumer relations through events and outreach.

## **Antibiotic Stewardship Meetings.**

Katie Ambrose with the National Livestock Producers briefed listeners on the National Institute for Animal Agriculture's (NIAA) antibiotic stewardship meetings conducted last November in Arkansas. The theme of the meetings was "From Metrics to Management." The meetings explored the usage of antibiotics in animal and human medicine, focusing on specific areas that can be measured in order to verify the progress made in reducing antimicrobial resistance.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Tom Chapel went into more detail. Chapel said attendees to the NIAA meetings were given the opportunity to sit

down and say, "these are the metrics that matter to me." Each group came up with a list

of measures that mattered most to them, resulting in four different metrics Chapel and his colleagues will look at going forward.

More information on these surveys can be found at [www.animalagriculture.com](http://www.animalagriculture.com).

## **American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture (AFBFA).**

AFBFA offered a unique experience to help bridge the gap between urban folk and agricultural producers. AFBFA created an "on the farm author experience," offering urban authors the chance to apply for one of 10 positions to meet with a farmer or rancher for lunch, followed by an open panel discussion.

The program received 34 applications for the 10 positions, including Shennen Bersani, a writer from Brooklyn, N.Y. Bersani's only experience with agriculture was her "illegal garden on her balcony fire escape in Brooklyn."

Bersani was impassioned by the experience, calling farmers and ranchers "the original environmentalists," and claiming that the experience "far exceeded" her expectations.

Scott Stump, education consultant with AFBFA, said the organization had more than 200 applicants for 20 slots to participate in a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) curriculum program developed by AFBFA. Applicants included students from five of the largest school districts in the country, including Los Angeles, Orange County and the Bronx.

## **North American Meat Institute (NAMI).**

Veal promotion was the topic of discussion for the NAMI, formerly the American Meat Institute, or AMI. Michelle Rossman highlighted collaborations with blogger Cindy's Table and the "Eat Better. Eat Veal." promotion.

## **National Cattlemen's Beef Association**

**(NCBA).** Wrapping up the beef checkoff's updates were NCBA's Mandy Carr Johnson, senior executive director of science and product solutions; Rick Husted, chief operations officer; and Season Solorio, senior director, issues management. The three covered topics ranging from the impacts of antibiotic resistance on human health, new beef products and the beef checkoff's social media presence.



**Editor's Note:** This article was written as part of Angus Media's online coverage of the 2016 Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show. For additional coverage, visit the Newsroom at [www.4cattlemen.com](http://www.4cattlemen.com).



## **Fostering consumer trust**

The Beef Checkoff Consumer Trust Committee met Jan. 29 at the Cattle Industry Convention to weigh in on ways to better connect with the beef consumer and how to effectively communicate with an increasingly disconnected audience.

The committee focused on building and maintaining consumer trust by using research to pursue continual improvement, with an eye toward long-term sustainable and profitable beef production and better consumer communications.

Committee chairs Chuck Kiker and Scott McGregor moderated the committee meeting.

After a vote, it was decided that the headlining issues for the committee to prioritize are:

- ▶ connect and communicate directly with consumers;
- ▶ protect beef's image; and
- ▶ develop a crisis-management plan.

Committee members and attendees chose to focus more intently on domestically focused initiatives than export-focused topics. It was urged that producers and industry professionals should be more transparent and communicate better with consumers.

Other areas of concern, rated with less importance, were to measure and improve sustainability, engage beef advocates and Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) initiatives.