

Improving the Checkoff

Industry-wide task force makes enhancement recommendations.

The Industry-Wide Beef Checkoff Task Force has developed four recommendations for strengthening the Beef Checkoff Program, providing more stakeholder input and making it more inclusive. Conclusions of the 18-member group were reached following extensive fact-finding and discussion, and finalized at a meeting in Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 7.

The mission of the task force was “to review, study and recommend enhancements to the Beef Promotion and Research Act and Order for the purpose of strengthening the checkoff for the common good of the beef industry.” The group met three times this summer to discuss various possible changes to the checkoff and their implications.

The recommendations are as follows.

Provide opportunity to petition for a referendum. The task force recommended the beef referendum process be revised to provide producers the opportunity to petition every five years for a referendum on continuing the checkoff. Ten percent of beef producers signing the petition at county offices would trigger the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to conduct a vote within a year. This is similar to the soybean referendum model.

Adjust the checkoff rate. To assure strong demand-building initiatives for the beef industry in the future and to offset 20 years of inflation, the task force recommended adjusting the per head checkoff rate to \$2. The 50-50 split between state beef councils and the Cattlemen’s Beef Board (CBB) would remain the same. The industry will need to approve any checkoff rate change through a referendum.

Enhance understanding of the Federation of State Beef Councils. The Federation of State Beef Councils gives priority to enhancing its identity in order to strengthen beef industry stakeholder understanding of the federation. Options

such as changing its name from The Federation Division to The Beef Checkoff Federation could be considered.

Make the checkoff more inclusive. The task force recommended any reference to the charter date of established national nonprofit industry-governed organizations be eliminated from definition (1260.113c) in the Beef Promotion and Research Order. This would make the checkoff program more inclusive.

The four recommendations were passed by at least a supermajority (two-thirds) of the task force; not all were supported unanimously. These recommendations will now be presented to national and state beef organizations, which will consider them as they develop future policy regarding the checkoff.

Members of the Industry-Wide Task Force were Jamie Willrett, co-chair, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA); Scott VanderWal, co-chair, American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF); Charles Beckendorf, National Milk Producers Federation; Tracy Brunner, Kansas; Virginia Coelho, California; Terry Detrick, National Farmers Union (NFU); Mark Dopp, American Meat Institute (AMI); Jim Hanna, Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA); Bob Hanson, Montana; Jack Hanson, National Livestock Producers Association; John Hendricks, Kentucky; Steve Kraut, American Veal Association; Steve Owens, Livestock Marketing Council; Gayland Pedhirney, National Meat Association (NMA); Billy Perrin, Livestock Marketing Association (LMA); C.R. “Dick” Sherron, Texas; Donald Stewart, Meat Importers Council of America; and Stephen Worley, Tennessee.

John Huston, Chicago, Ill., served as facilitator for the task force.



Editor’s Note: This article was distributed by the Industry-Wide Beef Checkoff Task Force, Box 239, 858 W. Armitage Ave., Chicago, IL 60614-4370; (312) 944-7153.