

Sustainability

Industry panel considers what the correct paths are for the beef industry.

by *Kindra Gordon*, field editor

How do you define sustainability?" was the question posed to four panel members during a session at the International Livestock Congress—USA 2013 hosted Jan. 15 in Denver. The panel included Cameron Bruett, chief sustainability officer with Greeley-based meat-packing company JBS Swift; Cristain Barcan of the world's largest chemical company, BASF; John Pollak, director of the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC) in Clay Center, Neb.;



PHOTOS BY KASEY MILLER

► "People look at sustainability as three buckets (environmental, economic, social)," said Barcan, "but I say, plain and simple, sustainability is 'How do we fulfill the needs we have today without compromising the future.'"



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and Kim Stackhouse-Lawson, director of sustainability research with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA).

Bruett said his company, JBS, views sustainability as representing fundamental values such as treating employees right, stewardship of resources and creating quality products.

"It's the confluence of economic, social and environmental progress," he said.

Lawson concurred, noting that sustainability initially started as concern over greenhouse gases and environmental issues. Today, she said, its definition is more about "balancing environmental responsibility with economic and social issues, as well."

Pollak, who was an animal breeder prior to becoming an administrator, said he prefers the more succinct definition of sustainability as "the capacity to endure."

"People look at sustainability as three buckets (environmental, economic, social)," said BASF's Barcan, "but I say, plain and simple, sustainability is 'How do we fulfill the needs we have today without compromising the future.'"

The panel noted that a big concern for the future is the world's rapidly increasing population and the fact that during the next 40 years the world will need to produce 70% more food.

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Science Does Matter

Efforts proceed for National Association for Advancement of Animal Science.

by *Kindra Gordon*, field editor

"There has been no single entity in Washington, D.C., to lobby for funding for animal research. There never has been," Russell Cross, head of the Department of Animal Science at Texas A&M University, told attendees at the International Livestock Congress—USA 2013 in Denver Jan. 15. As a result, critical underfunding of animal research exists, said Cross.

To address this issue and advocate for increased federal investment in animal science to support future animal-related research, the National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science was formed during the summer of 2012, Cross explained. He serves as president of the new association.

Today, the association has representation from 30 animal, dairy and poultry science departments from colleges and universities across the country. The association has been established as a 501(c)6, which allows lobbying. Cross

explained that most professional societies — such as the American Society of Animal Science — are 501(c)3 entities, which cannot lobby.

Cross noted that with the growing global population and the prediction that food production will need to double in the next 40 years, new technology and strong science will be critical.

"What's in the regulatory pipeline scares me to death," he said, noting the animal industry faces many challenges ahead. "We need science and have got to be prepared."

Cross also shared that current federal funding for animal and plant agricultural research has not been equal. Currently, 71% of federal funding goes to plant-related research and only 29% goes to animal-related research. Why? Cross said he believes it is because "they (plant researchers) have been more focused and better organized."



► From left, John Pollak, USMARC; Cristain Barcan, BASF; Kim Stackhouse, NCBA; and Cameron Bruett, JBS Swift, comprised a panel that looked at beef industry sustainability. The panel concurred that working together will be key to success.

“We have the finite resources and a lot of people to feed. Everyone — organic, natural, conventional producers — is going to have to work together, and everyone needs to do better [with regard to sustainability].”

Stackhouse emphasized that all sectors within the beef industry will need to explore technologies. As examples, she pointed to continued improvements of precision farming and genomics, and possibly new packing innovations to address efficiency and food waste. “All efficiencies make a difference. We need to realize we have to think bigger

and more holistic; it’s not just about efficiency with the cow.”

While there are many issues to address in the industry’s future sustainability, the panel concurred that working together will be key to success.

Bruett concluded, “Let’s be proud of who we are; let’s be proud of what we do. Let’s not let others define us, and let’s feed the world.”



Editor’s note: Currently, the beef checkoff has funded the only sustainability project that is focused on addressing both scientific and

consumer concerns regarding sustainable food production along all phases of the beef value chain. The first and largest sustainability project of its kind, the present U.S. Beef Sustainability Project will provide key information to continue to improve U.S. beef sustainability, which will be instrumental in the development of critical best management practices that demonstrate the industry’s ability to produce the highest-quality beef in a responsible manner. Findings from the project should be available by summer 2013. For more information see “Sustainable Solutions” on page 272 of this issue or follow this link: www.beefissuesquarterly.com/meetingthegrowingdemand.aspx.

Cross emphasized that the intention of the National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science is not to take money away from plant research. Rather, he said, “We want to make the pie [for research] bigger over time.”

He concluded, “We should be very concerned about the numbers being seen from states and Congress [for animal research]. It’s time for all of us to get in the game before it’s too late. We’ve seen it happen to poultry and dairy.”

The association’s officers and board of directors are:

- Russell Cross, president, head of department of animal science, Texas A&M University;
- Maynard Hogberg, vice president, chairman of department of animal science, Iowa State University;
- Kevin Pond, secretary, head of department of animal sciences, Colorado State University;
- Janice Swanson, treasurer, chairman of the department of animal science, Michigan State University;
- Ron Allen, associate dean for research and director of the agricultural experiment station, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Arizona;
- Larry Berger, head of department of animal science, University of Nebraska–Lincoln;



PHOTO BY KASEY MILLER

► Russell Cross, president, explained that the purpose of the National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science is to advocate for increased federal investment in animal science to support future animal-related research.

- John Carey, head of department of poultry science, Texas A&M University;
- Wayne Greene, head of department of animal science, Auburn University;
- Gerald Horn, head of department of animal science, Oklahoma State University;
- Ronald Kensingler, chairman of department of animal sciences, Ohio State University;
- Mike Lacy, head of department of poultry science, University of Georgia;

- Ken Odde, head of department of animal sciences and industry, Kansas State University.

For more information on the association or to join, contact Cross at hrcross@tamu.edu, Walt Smith at wsmith@lockelord.com or Lowell Randel at Lowell@therandelgroup.com.

