

the industry that will help beef producers redefine sustainability for our industry,” says Stackhouse-Lawson.

However, GRBSB’s efforts to define sustainable beef around the world may not be enough to satisfy all of the questions about beef. How continuous improvement will be made is to be left to a series of regional and national efforts that will work on a more local scale to help individual producers identify

**Sustainability defined:
A sustainable U.S. beef
industry is one in which the
full value chain is able to
balance economic viability,
environmental stewardship
and social responsibility
while meeting the growing
global demand for beef.**

and implement practices that can have the greatest impact in their own operations.

“We’ve really worked hard to prevent a one-size-fits-all approach to beef sustainability, both in the U.S. and at the global level. When others start trying to dictate which practices are more or less sustainable, then we will have a problem,” says Stackhouse-Lawson. “What will work well to improve the sustainability of an individual operation in Texas won’t necessarily work in California or Florida. When you expand that example to a global scale, it really magnifies the complexities of the beef value chain, and it shows just how complex this subject is. It also demonstrates how difficult it is to make large-scale improvements with sweeping mandates.”

There’s no stopping change

It may be clear to those inside the beef industry that change is slow in coming and improvements difficult to come by. For those outside the industry, that hasn’t always been acknowledged. Increasingly, changes are being encouraged by members within the supply chain. Earlier this year, McDonald’s announced that by 2016 it would begin sourcing a portion of its global beef needs from suppliers verified to be sustainable. When the announcement was made, there was no framework to verify a beef supply chain as sustainable, and there were many questions about how the company planned to achieve its goals.

In August, another global food giant, Nestlé, announced it had partnered with World Animal Protection, an animal-welfare

Nestlé announces farm animal welfare commitment

Nestlé is first major food company to form an international partnership with an animal-welfare NGO.

Nestlé has announced a major pledge to improve the welfare of the farm animals in its supply chain, following the signature of a partnership agreement with nongovernmental organization (NGO) World Animal Protection. The agreement means that the hundreds of thousands of farms that supply Nestlé with its dairy, meat, poultry and eggs will have to comply with tighter animal-welfare standards.

Nestlé, with its global purchasing footprint, also becomes the first major food company to form an international partnership with an animal-welfare NGO.

Nestlé has some 7,300 suppliers from whom it buys animal-derived products directly — everything from milk for its range of yogurts and ice creams to meat for its chilled foods and eggs for its fresh pastry and pasta.

Each of these suppliers, in turn, buys from others, meaning that Nestlé’s Responsible Sourcing Guidelines apply to literally hundreds of thousands of farms around the world.

“We know that our consumers care about the welfare of farm animals and we, as a company, are committed to ensuring the highest possible levels of farm animal welfare across our global supply chain,” said Benjamin Ware, the company’s manager of responsible sourcing.

World Animal Protection has been working with Nestlé on how to specifically tighten and improve the *Nestlé Responsible Sourcing Guideline*, which all suppliers must adhere to as part of the Nestlé Supplier Code. Both of these build upon the “Nestlé Commitment on Farm Animal Welfare.”

These now include, for example, spacing requirements for the rearing pens of certain species of animals, such as pigs and cows, to ensure they are not cramped and can engage in normal animal behavior.

In addition, following the involvement of World Animal Protection, Nestlé’s guidelines also seek to minimize pain for farm animals by using veterinary practices that reduce pain, or avoiding the practices in the first place by implementing different animal husbandry practices. An example would be the dehorning of cows.

Nestlé has commissioned an independent auditor, SGS, to carry out checks to ensure the new standards of animal welfare are met on its supplying farms. In 2014, several hundred farm assessments have already been carried out worldwide. Some of these checks are also attended, unannounced, by World Animal Protection representatives whose role is to verify the auditors.

When a violation is identified, Nestlé will work with the supplier to improve the treatment of farm animals to ensure they meet the required standards. If, despite engagement and guidance from Nestlé, the company is unable or unwilling to show improvement, it will no longer supply Nestlé.

The World Animal Protection agreement forms part of Nestlé’s broader *Responsible Sourcing* activities. These cover human rights, health and safety and environmental issues, and build upon multiple commitments, including, for example, a pledge that by the end of next year, 40% of the company’s key commodities — including meat, poultry, eggs and dairy — will be fully traceable.

This article is from Nestlé.

NGO, to enhance its commitment to animal welfare in its supply chain and as a part of its commitment to sustainability (see sidebar “Nestlé Announces Farm Animal Welfare Commitment”). Nestlé is one of the largest producers of prepared foods in the world, with an estimated 7,300 suppliers and hundreds of farms in its production chain.

“We know that our consumers care about the welfare of farm animals and we, as a company, are committed to ensuring the highest possible levels of farm animal welfare across our global supply chain,” said Benjamin Ware, Nestlé’s manager of responsible sourcing, as part of the announcement.

Nestlé says it will support and implement actions to promote animal health and welfare and eliminate certain practices, with an initial focus in the beef supply chain on “dehorning,

tail docking, disbudding and castration without anesthetic and analgesia, veal crates, [and] permanent tethering.”

Nestlé also will “engage with our supply chain partners to establish traceability of the animal-derived materials,” sourced by the company, according to the release.

With announcements such as those from McDonald’s and Nestlé, it is clear that conversations about beef industry sustainability aren’t going away, but perhaps they are beginning to shift to include a more holistic view of the elements that play into determining sustainability.

That’s good news, says Stackhouse-Lawson, who is also an expert on animal health and welfare.

“Animal health and welfare is a critical component of the conversation about

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