

# Texas Beef Checkoff Proves Successful in First Year

Funds build consumer confidence in beef and provide local producer education.

Commentary by **Richard Thorpe**, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association

**T**exas cattlemen and women voted in a referendum in June 2014 to establish a state-level beef checkoff program to promote my personal favorite food product — beef. The Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA) supported passage of the referendum, and it was overwhelmingly approved with 66.79% of producers voting in favor of creating the Texas Beef Checkoff.

The checkoff program is funded through a \$1-per-head assessment on cattle at each point of ownership transfer in Texas. A council of 20 cattle producers, known as the Beef Promotion and Research Council of Texas (BPRCT), manages the funds in accordance with Texas law. Collections from the checkoff began in October of 2014, and it's encouraging to see how much the program has accomplished in a short amount of time.

Since Oct. 1, 2014, more than \$7.2 million has been collected from the checkoff. This revenue assists beef producers and consumers by advancing critical education, research, nutrition and marketing efforts that help provide a safe, abundant and affordable beef supply worldwide.

The checkoff has created a competitive edge for Texas ranchers by significantly expanding educational efforts for producers. This has been made possible by using a portion of the funds to hold additional Texas Beef Quality Producer (TBQP) meetings throughout the state. The TBQP program is a collaborative effort of TSCRA, Texas Beef Council (TBC) and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension used to promote proper management practices for cattle producers. These efforts have proven extremely effective for helping cattle raisers deliver higher-quality beef products for consumers.

The checkoff has helped us make tremendous strides in teaching consumers

that beef is a healthy food product. This is critical as many physicians are recommending that patients diagnosed with high cholesterol should reduce beef consumption. As a rancher and a practicing medical doctor, I already know how healthy our product is, but many do not. This is why we must be proactive in sharing how beef consumption in moderation promotes a healthy body.

Checkoff funds have been used wisely to hold focus groups and physician research. These efforts have proven that doctors will change their recommendations to their patients after receiving factual information about how beef fits in a heart-healthy diet. The checkoff will enable us to expand these efforts in 2016 by training industry representatives to start calling on general practitioners and internists to educate them on new beef nutrition concepts. Updated beef nutrition facts will also be presented through key opinion leaders at many different physician events.

Additionally, the checkoff has allowed producers to increase investment in all existing markets across the world through demand-building programs for U.S. beef. These additional funds made it possible for producers to introduce Japan to Texas barbecue concepts at food shows, seminars and tasting events. It also provided resources to build on foreign media support and promotions.

Further, the checkoff allowed a Hong Kong importer group to visit Texas for a beef industry tour where Texas-themed promotions were introduced. More outreach efforts will be conducted in the future as the checkoff provides additional opportunities to market our product internationally.

Last, but not least, with the technologically driven world we live in today,

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it is important to continue utilizing various media platforms to help present interesting and timely information to the public and promote beef products. The checkoff has provided funds for the TBC to overhaul their website and update their social media profiles.

The new website, [www.txbeef.org](http://www.txbeef.org), was launched at the end of September 2015 and it now features Texas-specific content, such as 16 new Texas beef recipes, quality beef photography, healthy beef facts and the

development of three documentary-style videos to help put a face to the Texas rancher. These videos actually feature several TSCRA leaders who own and operate family ranches and can speak from experience about the importance of our industry.

This is just a snapshot of the many milestones the beef industry has reached through the Texas Beef Checkoff. With everything it has accomplished in just a year, it is exciting to think about what's ahead. TSCRA continues to recognize the

importance of promoting our product, sharing the work of our industry leaders and investing in the future of the beef industry. We appreciate the many leaders and producers who have made this program a success. We look forward to building on these notable accomplishments in the future.



**Editor's Note:** *Richard Thorpe is the first vice president of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and owner and operator of Mesa T Ranch in Winters, Texas.*