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Meat Business

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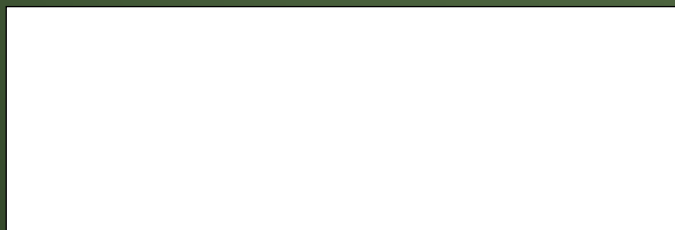
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Moving Canadian Sustainability Forward

LIKE ANY MAJOR, forward thinking incentive, it takes a big player to ultimately give the one big push needed to take the movement from an idea to application to execution and so is the case with Sustainable Beef. The whole idea of sustainability is nothing new and has been steadily growing for some time since the eco-friendly, carbon footprint and livestock humane awareness movements have all picked up pace and media attention in recent years. Yet the tag of sustainability as it is applied to beef is a fairly new idea.

When it comes to the overall meat industry, beef is not the only item on the menu but has the distinction of leading the sustainability charge here in Canada with the recent McDonald's appointment of Alberta being the first testing ground. Sustainable pork was in full gear as well but combating PEDv and African swine in Russia took precedence and sapped the energy out of the pork industry's environmentally sound, socially responsible and economic viability plans. Chicken and seafood, and pretty much all reusable resources, from food to forests to minerals to plants, have to straighten up and become sustainable.

The first problem with any new trend is 'what does it really mean' for the rest of us hipsters trying to catch up? The term 'sustainable' can be so vague in description and practicality. We didn't even have a way to verify or prove what we were talking about before everyone jumped on the sustainable bandwagon. It was after all, a cool idea that could revolutionize the meat industry by helping to re-build consumer trust and confidence and we'd all be doing our part for the humane treatment of animals and eco-friendly efforts to wipe out that carbon footprint. Let's face it, on the whole, we need to sort out our criteria for sustainability and yet I'm not sure if that really means at the producer level as opposed to the processing stage.

More and more news headlines are zeroing in on the environmental impacts of the beef industry as it applies to feed and land as well as water usage and waste. Comparatively speaking, raising cattle on ranches spread over acres of pastureland per kilogram of protein produced doesn't look good on paper, but what are we really talking about here? We're trying to address cleaner means with which to 'sustain' a reusable resource.

The bigger problem with this innovative forward thinking is more than just defining what we're hoping to achieve, is how do we track and verify. The end result is if McDonald's – and any other retailer for that matter - is going to lead the charge and advertise sustainable beef on the menu, then they must be able to show the consumer it really is sustainable, more so if they're charging a premium for that product.

The Global Roundtable on Sustainable Beef recently released its Principles and Criteria draft that spelled out their Sustainable Mission Statement as that relates to Planet, People, Animals, and Progress, but the real proof still remains to be seen in the tracking. The solution seems to be in hand when the CCA spearheaded the BIX software program to specially achieve that end.

BIX (Beef InfoXchange System) is ramping up to deliver BIX 2.0 – a second generation software that manages and tracks the complex beef supply chain from ranch to consumer. And this is where innovation gets exciting. As a former computer programmer, I understand the task to centralize any processing procedure but if we Canadians are known for anything, it's our tenacity when it comes to solving the big picture with technical savvy. Whatever is learned through the McDonald's charge will set the format for all meat processing and Canada has the chance to get sustainable from concept to practical application. Sounds like something we can handle. **M**



The Sustainable Beef Industry: Canada's "Great" Story

By Scott Taylor

FOR MOST CANADIAN beef producers, "sustainable" beef has always been a fact of life. It's unlikely you'll find a farmer or rancher in the country who doesn't believe his operation is sustainable.

However, Sustainable Beef (yes, in capitals) has officially come to this country and Canada's beef producers had better be prepared: Prepared for something that isn't even defined yet.

As it is, Fawn Jackson believes Canadian cattlemen have a great story to tell and when anyone asks her about "the Sustainable Beef industry," Ms. Jackson wants to do everything she can to take what is still a somewhat vague concept and make it clear and verifiable.

These days, that's a tough job. However, it soon could get a lot easier. On September 24 and 25 at Duncan Lake Ranch in Kelowna, B.C., the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef will hold its first major meeting. At least, it will be the first major get-together since the group was formed back in June.

At this meeting, a growing number of eclectic partners, including the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, McDonald's Restaurants, the World Wildlife Federation, Loblaws, Nature Canada, Costco, Cargill, the Manitoba Beef Producers, the Royal Bank, Walmart, the Barley Council of Canada, Merck Animal Health, the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, the Alberta Beef Producers, the Beef Farmers of Ontario, A & W Restaurants, the Alberta Conservation Association and Ducks Unlimited will come together to clearly establish the Sustainable Beef industry in Canada.

Why? Because it will probably be the most important thing Canadian beef producers do for the next two years even though many aren't sure what it is they're supposed to be doing. After all, McDonald's Canada purchased 70 million pounds of Canadian beef last year and McDonald's has made it extremely clear that by 2016, the company will purchase only "verified Sustainable Beef."

This should come as no surprise to anyone in the industry. McDonald's, along with Cargill, JBS Foods and a slew of other multinationals, was at the forefront of the creation of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef back in 2011.

By its own definition, "The Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef is a global, multi-stakeholder initiative developed to advance continuous improvement in sustainability of the global beef value chain through leadership, science and multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration. The GRBS envisions a world in which all aspects of the beef value chain are environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable."

And at the global level, those are "The Three Pillars" that guide the GRBS: "That Sustainable Beef is (1) Environmentally sound, (2) Socially Responsible and (3) Economically viable." Period.

Of course, it's important to note that The Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef was not created by some eco-conscious committee at the United Nations. Instead, it's an initiative of McDonald's Restaurants, Cargill, Elanco Animal Health, Merck Animal Health, Walmart, JBS Food, Solidaridad (a Dutch organization that believes in fair and sustainable trade) and the World Wildlife Fund.

As a result of its influence on the GRBS, McDonald's chose Canada - specifically Alberta - over Australia and Europe in May of 2014 as the site of its first pilot project in its somewhat ambitious goal to serve only "Sustainable Beef" in its restaurants around the world. In many ways, Alberta is the perfect choice: The province is home to about 40 per cent of Canada's cattle herd and about 80 per cent of the country's beef processing. It also has more experience in beef production than most regions of the planet.

"We've got all the building blocks right here," said Bryan Walton, chief executive of the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association. "We're a beef nation. We have the land base, we have the know-how and we have the infrastructure."

According to Jackson, they also have the animal welfare standards.

"Canada's animal welfare standards made it a natural fit for a pilot project like this," Jackson said proudly. "We really are global leaders in this area."

That's true and yet "Sustainable Beef" is an initiative that's still looking for a definition, at least in terms of practicality and application. Currently, there is no action plan, only the hypothetical. So now that McDonald's has forged ahead and put the spotlight on Alberta to be the testing ground, it's a lot like putting the cart before the horse inasmuch as the largest purchaser of beef in Canada has launched the first step without (a) a plan and (b) a proven way to track and achieve the goal of serving nothing but Sustainable Beef.

The meeting in September will attempt to provide an applicable timeline and turn something that is still a wonderful idea - a legitimate idea, to be sure - into an actual working model with identifiable scope.

Jackson, the Manager of Environment and Sustainability for the Canadian Cattlemen's Association isn't necessarily the driving force behind Sustainable Beef in Canada. That title would probably go to McDonald's. However, Ms. Jackson is convinced that the initiative is good for everyone in the industry and like many of her colleagues at the CCA, she is committed to making it work.

continued on page 8



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"It's clear to me and many of our partners that the market is sending a pretty strong message that consumers want sustainable products and they also want proof of that sustainability," Jackson said during a telephone interview from her office in Calgary.

"McDonald's has announced a commitment to source verified sustainable beef by 2016. A&W currently claims that its beef has been raised at the leading edge of sustainable production and Walmart continually promises to deliver more sustainable agricultural products. So we (the Canadian Cattlemen's Association) have been taking great strides to ensure that Canadian cattle producers are appropriately prepared to address this growing consumer and market demand."

Jackson comes by her position at the CCA honestly. After all, she grew up on a purebred Charolais, Simmental and seed farm in Inglis, Man., near the Saskatchewan border. She staffs the CCA's environment committee and is part of a handful of research initiatives involving industry, government and international federations. She represents Canadian cattle producers at the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, the International Meat Secretariat Sustainable Meat Committee and the Five Nations Beef Alliance Sustainability Committee. In fact, she actually has played the lead role in setting up the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef.

And even she has written: "There is no precise definition of Sustainable Beef and how sustainable beef production is proven continues to be a mystery."

"That's true, but the role of research, technology, innovation and communication hold steadfast as the foundation for making 'sustainable' decisions by all members of the value chain," she added.

Still, even the major stakeholders have no official definition. McDonald's Corp.'s sustainability vice president Bob Langert publicly addressed the issue of sustainable beef and admitted there was "a difficulty defining it." Bryan Weech, director of livestock agriculture for the World Wildlife Fund, told The Huffington Post that "there is no one, universally accepted definition for beef sustainability."

Soon, however, the rubber will hit the road and for beef producers this seemingly beneficial concept without a definition should be frightening. Amazingly, it is not.

"McDonald's decision to pilot its sustainable beef program in Canada is a win for producers," Alberta Beef Producers president Greg Bowie told the Calgary Herald. "McDonald's has steadfastly pledged it won't impose rules on how to raise cattle. Instead, it has promised to work with producers, feeders and packers to create practical guidelines on environmental stewardship, animal health and welfare, and food safety.

"A lot of these things are going to be things that producers are doing anyhow. They're just going to come up with a means of proving that the producer is doing it."

According to Jackson, the key to verifying that McDonald's massive beef purchases indeed come from producers that are practicing sustainable farming and production is the Beef InfoXchange System (BIXS 2.0), an economically viable traceability and information transfer system.

According to the CCA, "BIXS 2.0 is a database and web application that will assist in the capture and exchange of economically beneficial individual animal and carcass data across the Canadian beef supply chain."

"Sustainable beef is a full life cycle program from birth to slaughter to retail," explained Jackson. "For the CCA, BIXS 2.0 will remain the main tracking system. It can be difficult to exchange information from one side of the program to the other and so BIXS 2.0 enables that."

In the meantime, Canada's new Verified Beef Production program is designed to uphold food safety standards during processing, Jackson added. It will soon cover other areas including animal care and biodiversity.

Of course, that's why it's no surprise that various agriculture writers, ranchers and executives within the beef industry have already suggested that verifying and measuring the sustainability is nothing more than ensuring that everyone in the industry lives up to the standards that most people are following right now.

Regardless, the CCA maintains that it will be able to track a system that isn't yet clearly defined, while McDonald's claims it isn't going to tell producers what to do. For now, that means people like Jackson are telling producers to "just keep doing what you're doing."

And that means, when McDonald's Canada's manager of sustainability, Jeffrey Fitzpatrick-Stilwell tells the Huffington Post, "I believe that right now, we are purchasing lots and lots of sustainable beef," the keep-doing-what-you're-doing meme makes sense.

Jackson definitely agrees with that sentiment, but she's also quick to point out that learning and improving aren't bad things.

"We can all get behind on keeping up to date on potential improvements and it's easy to do things the way we've always done," Jackson wrote. "However, striving to continually

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improve production practices contributes to the economic, environmental and social viability of every operation and the industry as a whole.”

In the meantime, McDonald’s Canada, which already sources all of its beef from Canadian suppliers, has created a mandate that is quite clear: “Close to 60 years ago, McDonald’s started out as a hamburger destination. Today, we offer a range of menu choices, but burgers remain some of our most iconic menu items. That’s just one reason we want to do our part to improve environmental practices in the way beef is produced, support positive workplaces in the beef industry, and drive continuous improvement in animal health and welfare. Plus, we envision doing all of this while providing affordability and quality, along with economic viability for those who raise cattle and produce beef.”

Now, it’s up to the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef to get the job done. At the meeting in Kelowna in September, the conversation will start with a definition of Sustainable Beef, probably morph into a discussion of economic viability and then branch out into areas like these, that will concern both consumers and producers:

- (1) What is driving the initiative? Animal welfare? Carbon foot-printing? Eco-consciousness?
- (2) Can enough beef be produced in a Sustainable Beef world to fulfill the demand? If not, then what is this about? Is it a hip endeavor to do something to help the planet or simply a slick advertising campaign?
- (3) Is the day coming when beef that is produced on a farm that is considered NOT to be Sustainable becomes something akin to conflict diamonds? Will buying from an alleged Non-Sustainable farm be like buying cheap goods on the black market and will consumers be prepared to take a chance on a cheaper, non-sustainable, product?

Regardless, September’s meeting will be crucial to the future of Canadian beef production.

“The future of sustainable production sourcing and verification might be a bit blurry yet, but Canadian producers have established themselves as world leaders in animal care, production efficiencies and land management,” Jackson wrote. “They are in an excellent position to respond to future market demands.”

Indeed. While McDonald’s is not paying a premium to be the face of Sustainable Beef, it’s no secret that the folks at McDonald’s Canada are going to try to make the Big Mac an eco-conscious sandwich. It will be up to the Canadian Beef Producers to make that happen and it would appear those producers are excited about the challenge.

“That’s true, McDonald’s is not paying a premium for this, but one of the pillars of the Global Roundtable is economic viability,” Jackson said. “Economic viability will be an important issue for us in Canada and, of course, being the first to land a deal with McDonald’s could give our market a significant edge internationally.”


The one thing Jackson always makes clear is that “beef is already a product that people love.” For her, The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef will make consumers love the product even more.

“More than anything else, the Sustainable Beef project will provide everyone with more information about beef production,” said Jackson. “And I believe that consumers want more information about a product they already love. And that can’t be anything but good for our industry.


“As I see it, the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association and Canadian beef producers have a great story to tell.” **M**

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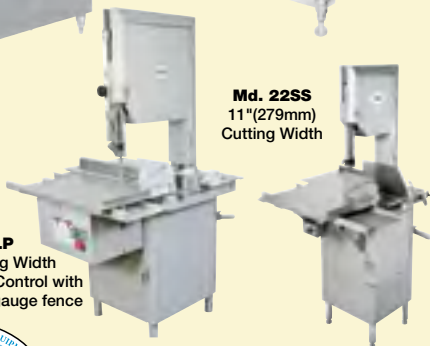
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CFIA introduces penalties for non-compliance with meat safety requirements

THE GOVERNMENT OF Canada announced in July that it is continuing to strengthen Canada's food safety system by allowing the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to issue monetary penalties to businesses that do not meet Canada's meat safety requirements. The new regulatory amendment expands Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPs) to the Meat Inspection Act and the Meat Inspection Regulations, 1990.

"AMPs are an additional tool that will support the CFIA in delivering its mandate for food safety. AMPs do not replace existing inspection and enforcement tools, but instead offer additional flexibility in addressing meat-related violations," stated Dr. Martine Dubuc, Chief Food Safety Officer for Canada and Vice-President, Science Branch, CFIA.

The regulations came into force immediately following the announcement. The CFIA will be working with the Canadian

meat industry to help gradually transition to the new regulations. The amendments to the Agriculture and Agri-Food Administrative Monetary Penalties Regulations were published in the Canada Gazette in July for public viewing at <http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2014/2014-07-16/html/sor-dors173-eng.php>

"Knowing that food is healthy and safe to eat is fundamentally important to all Canadians and their families. Our Government is committed to protecting consumers and is taking steps to further strengthen Canada's food safety system by introducing penalties for companies that fail to meet meat safety requirements" stated Rona Ambrose, Minister of Health.

Need to Know


This regulatory amendment will allow CFIA inspectors to issue an AMP for non-compliance with 84 provisions of the Meat



“Knowing that food is healthy and safe to eat is fundamentally important to all Canadians and their families. Our Government is committed to protecting consumers and is taking steps to further strengthen Canada's food safety system by introducing penalties for companies that fail to meet meat safety requirements” - Rona Ambrose, Minister of Health

Inspection Act (MIA) and the Meat Inspection Regulations (MIR). These provisions include items related to: food safety (control programs such as HACCP) and non-food safety (labelling and consumer protection).

AMPs do not replace existing inspection and enforcement tools, but instead offer the Agency an additional tool in managing non-compliance situations.

The expansion of the AMPs to include the MIA and MIR supports other activities being undertaken by the CFIA, such as those outlined in the Healthy and Safe Food for Canadians Framework. This framework illustrates how our Government is working to prevent food safety risks and protect Canadians when unsafe products enter the marketplace. 



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Label Confusion Clouds Mechanical Tenderizing Safety Warnings

CANADIAN SHOPPERS WILL be able to see next month if the beef they're buying has been mechanically tenderized. Labelling regulations to take effect Aug. 21 are designed to protect consumers after the largest meat recall in the country's history two years ago. Health Canada says beef that has been mechanically tenderized must have a sticker saying that.

Packaged steaks must also have cooking instructions that the meat must reach an internal temperature of 63° C and must be turned at least twice. Health Canada says the rules are meant to ensure that tenderized meat is labelled from the processor to the consumer, since it's hard to tell just by looking at it. But Bruce Cran, president of the Consumers' Association of Canada, said the cooking requirements are too complicated for most people and he wants mechanical tenderizing banned outright.



“Health Canada says the rules are meant to ensure that tenderized meat is labelled from the processor to the consumer, since it’s hard to tell just by looking at it.”

“What average Canadian having a beer and a steak is going to measure the temperature of the meat?” Cran asked. “This process has the potential to seriously sicken people or cause fatalities.”

Mechanical tenderizing is a process for tougher cuts of meat where needles or blades are used to penetrate or pierce the surface, or to inject the meat with a marinade or tenderizing solution. While it tenderizes it can also inject E. coli bacteria that may be on the surface of the meat into the centre. That makes the bacteria harder to kill when cooking, particularly if a steak is done rare.

Federal officials began looking at issues surrounding mechanically tenderized meat after a massive E.-coli-related beef recall from Alberta’s XL Foods in 2012. The plant was shut down for about a month when E. coli was found in processed beef. Eighteen people fell ill after eating meat linked to the plant.

“Irradiation of all meats is the best way to ensure meat is safe,” Cran says.

Health Canada received an application to irradiate ground beef, poultry, shrimp and prawns a decade ago, but a spokesman says the public was worried about the process. Another application from the industry is under consideration.

Mark Klassen, director of technical services with the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association, supports irradiation but says mechanically tenderized beef is safe as long as it’s cooked properly. “We’ve had very few cases of illness, even though mechanically tenderized beef has been in Canada in large quantities for a long time,” Klassen said. “It’s had a very good safety record.”

Klassen said the association was involved in the research that supported the new labelling, including the cooking instructions. He says it also tested the labels with a sample

of Canadians to make sure they were understandable and practical. He went on to say research determined that earlier Health Canada instructions to bring the meat to the same internal temperature as ground beef - 71° C - made the beef tougher. “63° C is safe as long as the meat is turned at least twice,” he said.

“We’ve been able to achieve our food safety objectives and we’ve been able to achieve a more consistent temperature, which contributes to a better eating quality as well,” Klassen added.

Keith Warriner, a food science professor at the University of Guelph, said labelling is good as long as the message is simple. “Labels alone aren’t enough to change people’s attitudes and behaviours,” Warriner said, noting an education campaign might be needed.

The labels will appear in supermarket meat coolers at a point in the summer when barbecue season has already been sizzling for some time. George Fleming, sales supervisor at Barbecue Country in Edmonton, said, “Customers aren’t usually talking about mechanical tenderizing when shopping for grills. You pay a little more but you know the meat hasn’t been tenderized.”

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Establishing a Client Database

The Key to a Meat Department's Client Retention

By Ronnie P. Cons

IT IS A well known cultural adage that “knowledge is power”. This is especially so in the retail industry where the success of the retailer is directly proportional to how well he knows his client’s needs and consequently satisfies them. If the client needs are not known then it is inevitable that their needs will not be properly satisfied thus resulting in a high percentage of client loss to competitors.

This principle is especially relevant to the meat departments that sell the basic meat and poultry items that will be fed to their clients’ families. Most clients are very particular about the quality of the meat that they buy, the price they pay and the quality of service that they receive. In a previous article we suggested to make a market research study to determine the clients’ levels of satisfaction concerning the four marketing Ps - Price, Place, Promotion and Product.

The results of the study would help the meat department adapt its marketing elements to better satisfy their clients. This article goes one step further in that it calls for the establishment of a Client Database of all of the meat department’s clients. What is the purpose of this database and is it worth the effort and time?

If “knowledge is power” then it stands to reason that “knowledge of your clients is profits”!

The first step in setting up the database is to have each client that buys meat be given a questionnaire or survey form to fill out. They can be provided with an incentive of a 5% to 10% discount on their next purchase when the completed form is submitted.

The survey form should contain the following questions:

- What kinds of meat products do you buy?
- In what quantities do you purchase meat products?
- What type of meat products would you like to see sold?
- Were you satisfied with the level of service you received?

It would also be beneficial to the quality of your database if you were able to add the following questions to your form that included names of their family members, their birthdates,

their gender, their gender and other relative information such as wedding anniversary or other special personal milestones. To help motivate your clients to answer these personal questions, you can indicate they will be entitled to gifts on those special dates.

All of this information will be used for increasing your customers level satisfaction and retention and will be placed into a database linked to an e-mail program with promotional fliers for different purposes.

E-mails can be sent out to parents before birthdays congratulating them and offering a discount on meats for a nice barbecue meal for their child’s upcoming birthday. With this information at hand from the survey form, the meat department will already know the child’s and parent’s favourites so they can suggest the right package.

Think about having their special order delivered to their home complete with drinks and plates! This sign of caring and remembering on your part will be chalked up as providing a level of customer service above and beyond. The same type of service can be arranged for a spouse or partner or any other special personal or business event.

In addition to the promotion of special events, this type of customer feedback can be rewarded with emails containing discount vouchers, upcoming sales, recipes, etc. The important point in this exercise is to stay in regular contact with your clients and show them that you care about them and are focused on their needs. The net result will be higher levels of client satisfaction and retention as well as a more profitable meat department. **M**



Ronnie P. Cons is EVP of C&C Packing Inc., a leading Canadian distributor of meat and poultry. He can be contacted at rcons@ccpacking.com.

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Government Announces Partnership for Canadian Beef Centre of Excellence

By Cam Patterson

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD Canada Minister Gerry Ritz and Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification Michelle Rempel joined Canada Beef Chair Chuck MacLean and President Rob Meijer announced \$3,844,800 in funding in July for the new Canadian Beef Centre of Excellence.

“Our Government is proud to support this cutting-edge facility. This Centre will give our industry a competitive advantage in showcasing Canada’s top-quality meats and will allow our producers to capitalize on new and existing market opportunities,” said Minister Ritz during today’s announcement.

This state of the art facility will provide space and resources to help the industry promote new beef products, training and education focused around the technical advantages of Canadian beef, and play a valuable role in marketing Canadian beef domestically and internationally.

“The Centre of Excellence will further empower our industry to reach consumers and customers both here at home and around the world to build brand loyalty and generate new marketing opportunities,” said Meijer.

With a full commercial kitchen, meat case, classroom, dining



facilities and broadcast capabilities, the Canadian Beef Centre of Excellence will become a cornerstone in the Canadian beef industry, and provide a focal point for domestic and international marketing opportunities, and incoming trade missions.

According to Meijer, The Centre of Excellence will be “a nexus where the Canadian beef industry can drive innovation, build knowledge and awareness, foster important relationships and ultimately create value for Canadian beef and veal producers.”

The establishment of the Centre will also enable Canada Beef Inc. to further build Canadian beef brand loyalty with key customers in emerging and international markets.

The Canadian Beef Centre of Excellence is set to be completed in Calgary by December 2014. [M](#)

Canada Beef Inc. is the cattle producer-funded and run organization responsible for domestic and international beef and veal market development. It has offices in Canada, Mexico, Japan, China and Taiwan. Canada Beef Inc. works to foster loyalty to the Canadian beef brand and build strong relationships with trade customers and partners. These efforts increase demand for Canadian beef and the value producers receive for their cattle.

Brand Loyalty and the Centre of Excellence

by Cam Patterson

ROB MEIJER IS the President of Canada Beef Inc. and the visionary behind the Centre of Excellence. In an exclusive interview, Rob shared some of his thoughts with Canadian Meat Business about the new state of the art facility.

“When I started to peel back the onion I quickly realized we didn’t have a brand,” stated Rob about the need for this new venue. “We really want the Centre to become the place where the Canadian Beef industry can hang its hat, sort to speak.”

The metaphor means the Centre will become the nexus for regenerating global brand loyalty.

“When you talk about brands, you’re really talking about what we are worth? How much money do we lose if our brand loyalty erodes? No one could answer that question and that told us we never had a brand, because no one could talk about the value beyond sales into a market,” Rob states. And brand loyalty is the true determinant when it comes to closing trade deals with partners in Europe, China, Japan, and Middle East to name a few.

It was clear Canada’s competitive edge suffered in those markets and Canada Beef was established to facilitate a

network of offices throughout the world to better position Canada globally. The Center of Excellence was designed to specifically tackle the root of the problem of brand loyalty and represent our beef on the world stage.

“In order for us to be a global player that could achieve brand loyalty with the right markets and the right partners, we need to bring the brand to life. We just couldn’t talk about it, show it on paper or on web sites,” Rob adds. “We have to do more. We have to feel it, taste it, and that really gets to the heart of the brand doesn’t it.”

Even though the facility will be housed in Calgary, Meijer emphasizes this is a national mandate and the scope is beyond Alberta and any one province. The Centre will also serve as a meeting spot for trade missions and buying groups from prospective trading partners with potential who know little about Canada Beef.

“We have to think beyond cutting meat and cooking it until it tastes good. Brand has to be something more than a symbol,” Rob says. “And that’s what we want the Center to represent to the industry. It will be our home where we can train, and showcase to a broader consumer base around the globe. Once we create a demand on a global level, then we’ve got brand loyalty.” [M](#)

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Canada Holding Firm on Spread of PEDv

By Scott Taylor

GARY STORDY WANTS everyone to know that Canada's pork producers will be ever vigilant. However, the spokesman for the Canadian Pork Council in Ottawa is obviously pleased with Canada's measures to limit the spread of Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus.

"We've been very fortunate that the spread of PEDv has not been as rapid in Canada as it's been in other nations," said Stordy said, from his Ottawa office last month. "In total, 68 sites, and that's just 68 sites right across Canada, have been affected by the disease but there have been no new cases since June 13 in Middlesex County, Ontario (near London). That doesn't mean we've eliminated it, but with the measures we've taken, we've been able to control it."

PEDv is the acronym for Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus (PED virus or PEDv). It is a coronavirus that infects the cells in the lining of the small intestine of a pig. It is especially devastating on piglets, which suffer severe diarrhea and ultimately dehydration. It's the massive dehydration that kills

the small animals. While older hogs will get very sick and lose a lot of weight, newborn piglets usually die anywhere from three-to-21 days of contracting the disease.

The disease was first discovered in Europe but it didn't take long for it to become a major issue in Asia. The highly infectious virus reached the United States last spring and got to Canada this past winter.

In fact, the first case in Canada was recorded in late January when the Ontario government investigated a hog farm in Middlesex County near London, after a laboratory discovered the virus. Soon after, one of Canada's biggest pork processors, Olymel LP, released word that tests confirmed the virus had been found at an unloading dock at its Saint-Esprit slaughter facility northeast of Montreal.

However, that's to a number of factors, the disease has been limited mostly to Ontario and Quebec. There have been two reported instances in Manitoba, but because a new report of

the infection hasn't been registered since mid-June, fears of the epidemic that destroyed nearly eight million piglets in the United States might have been averted in Canada.

"If there is one thing we have going for us, it's that our industry is spread out across the country so it's more difficult for the virus to spread from farm to farm," said Stordy. "We also have to give credit to the Canadian Swine Health Board and the federal government for implementing better bio-security measures outside the industry. That's been a major part of the advantages we've had in Canada.

"As well, this industry has been sluggish in recent years and once reports came back to us about the outbreak in the States, that scared our producers. Everyone went to work as quickly as possible to keep it out of Canada as best we could. So thanks to extensive bio-security measures and our constant communication with producers about the disease, we've had positive results. Frankly, there is a financial incentive to insure your farm or place of production is PEDv-free."

It's been especially important to put a stop to the disease in Canada when one considers the consequences. In late June, Russia announced that it would halt imports from U.S. swine exporters, "with the aim of preventing the disease from being brought into Russia." In early July, Canada made the ban list.

"This is a very important market for Canada swine exporting," says Nancy Weicker, Executive Director of the Canadian Swine Exporters Association. "Our pigs have high health and given we share similar geographic and climate conditions, means low mortality and high genetics that subsequently translate to successful export relations."

As a result, the Canadian Pork Producers created a list of seven areas upon which to focus:

- (1) Open communications among stakeholders
- (2) Bio-security both for on farm and off
- (3) Ongoing active surveillance and reporting
- (4) Transport measures, including at the border
- (5) Clarity of the PEDv risks associated with feed
- (6) Research to address PEDv knowledge gaps
- (7) Supporting PEDv containment and elimination

"Producers have worked hard to implement emergency response plans and increase bio-security measures, but now have to work even harder to protect Canada's herd health," said Canadian Pork Council's Chair Jean-Guy Vincent in a written statement.

"Unfortunately, there are some things that are out of the control of the producers such as the potential cross contamination of feed ingredients and of trucks involved in the transportation of live animals. The pork industry has to consider all information that is currently available and take every step possible to stop the spread of this virus and eliminate PED from Canada." **M**



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Ag Ministers Focus on Emerging Opportunities At Annual Meeting

CANADA'S FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL and territorial (FPT) Ministers of Agriculture concluded their annual meeting in mid-July which included discussions on creating opportunities for a dynamic agriculture and agri-food sector in Canada. The Ministers continue to plan for long-term success, while taking necessary actions to further strengthen the sector, which contributed \$106.9 billion to Canada's GDP in 2013.

FPT Ministers committed to enhancing collaboration between governments, academia and industry to continue to build a modern and competitive sector that contributes to Canada's economy and economic growth. Ministers will maintain efforts to improve infrastructure, strengthen the regulatory framework, enhance market access and development, and advance investment in innovation.

"Federal-provincial-territorial collaboration and partnership is essential in ensuring the long-term success of Canadian Agriculture. We continue to work with industry to build a modern, science-based environment that will make Canada a destination of choice for R&D and value-added processing

investment. By focusing on access to new growth markets and emerging opportunities, we will ensure that the sector continues to serve as an engine of economic growth for the Canadian economy", stated Gerry Ritz, Federal Agriculture Minister.

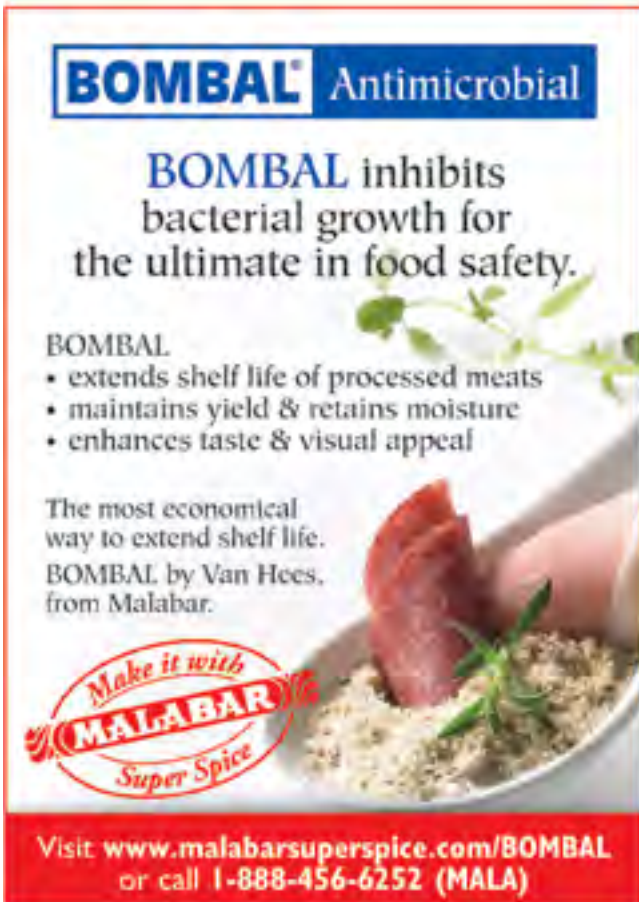
The Ministers discussed ongoing trade negotiations, such as those between Canada and the European Union (EU) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. They emphasized the importance of signing trade agreements that benefit the agriculture and agri-food sector, while recognizing the importance of supply management in Canada. In discussing the new cheese access that would be provided to the EU under the Canada-EU Free Trade Agreement, Ministers recognized the importance of the federal government's commitment to monitor impacts and provide compensation. Together, federal and provincial governments continue to stand alongside Canadian and U.S. industry to deliver a unified message of the negative impacts that U.S. Country of Origin Labelling (COOL) is having on both sides of the border.

Provincial and territorial ministers highlighted the vital importance of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) to the agricultural sector, including food processing, and discussed the importance of addressing workforce challenges in the short and long-term. They agreed to monitor and report back on the impacts of federal reforms and work with the federal government to address the ongoing needs of the sector.

"Agriculture is the cornerstone of the economy, built on innovation. We will continue to work with counterparts across the country to build opportunities close to home and around the world for producers, processors and the entire value chain through strategic investment. At the same time, we must continue to focus on important issues for producers like water management, trade, business risk management, food safety and transportation", stated Ron Kostyshyn, Manitoba Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

The Ministers focussed their attention during the conference on **Innovation**

In order to meet growing global demand, the Ministers discussed the need to increase agricultural productivity through adoption of new technologies, improved production and business practices, increased research and development, and labour investments. Building on the current five-year Growing Forward 2 (GF2) policy and programs, the Ministers examined longer-term issues, trends and strategies that will guide the future success of the sector. In this context, the Ministers were briefed on the recommendations in the final report of the Agri-Innovators Committee which provides a foundation for government and industry action in key areas to support tomorrow's globally successful sector.



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Quick Facts

- In 2012, the Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector employed over 2.1 million people, and provided one in eight jobs in Canada.
- Canada is the world's fifth-largest exporter of agriculture and agri-food products, with 2013 exports of \$50.4 billion.

Regulations

Regulatory modernization efforts will further enhance sector competitiveness and maintain a world-class system that protects the health and safety of Canadians with the appropriate level of oversight. The Ministers recognize the importance of the proposed Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) outcomes-based transformation initiatives to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden, and remove barriers to innovation, while ensuring alignment of FPT actions.


International Strategy and Trade

With almost half of Canada's total agricultural production destined for export, the sector's growth potential lies in its ability to expand markets abroad, making this a key priority for both industry and governments. In 2013, the Canadian agri-food and seafood industry exported a record \$50.4 billion. The Ministers continue to support efforts to stimulate innovation and cultivate a competitive advantage that complements governments' pro-trade market development initiatives, recognizing the importance of supply management.

Emergency Management

Ministers endorsed proactive work on an approach to mitigate risks, focusing on all components of emergency management: prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Part of this work will complement FPT governments focus on better collaboration between governments, academia and industry in exploring avenues to prevent animal and plant health risks which pose a threat to the sustainable and economic well-being of the sector. The Ministers also noted the significant work undertaken with industry towards the development of a Livestock Market Interruption Strategy, and recommitted their support to this project to ensure its completion in 2015.

Key Issues

With respect to the issue of Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus, the Ministers acknowledged the importance of collaborative efforts used to contain the virus, and encouraged continued emphasis on the implementation of bio-security measures across the value chain to further protect the pork industry. In addition, the Ministers discussed the importance of integrated water management practices for sustained growth and risk mitigation. 

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Outlook Good for Meat Industry

By Cam Patterson

AN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIST says a new international outlook “flips the last 10 years on its head” for the farm industry. The outlook from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization looks at demand for agriculture products from 2014 to 2023.

It says crop prices are expected to drop for one or two years before stabilizing at levels that remain above the pre-2008 period, but significantly below recent peaks. Wheat prices will decrease because of “ample production prospects” in the United States, Canada and Brazil and meat, dairy and fish prices are expected to rise.

“If we look at the last 10 years and leave out this year, the grains and oilseeds sector has had quite a run-up in prices and in profitability, whereas the cattle and hog sectors had challenge after challenge after challenge that they were facing,” says James Bryan of Farm Credit Canada. “So then in this 10-year outlook, it seems like the grains and oilseeds sector should remain profitable, but it’s going to be much tighter margins than experienced in the last five or six years. Whereas the cattle and hog sectors, because of lower feed prices and fairly high prices, seems like they should be doing fairly well.”

Add to this equation that people are also eating more meat.

According to the outlook, developing countries will account for 83 per cent of extra meat eaten in 2023, with Asian markets consuming more than half of it. The report says global meat consumption per capita is expected to reach 36.3 kilograms in retail weight by 2023 - an increase of 2.4 kilograms.

The report also notes that a free trade agreement Canada signed with the European Union last fall will likely increase exports for the meat sector. Exports could be the bread and butter for Canadian producers.

“In North America, and particularly in Canada, we produce much more than we can consume domestically, so we are absolutely dependant on growing markets in developing countries to export our product to because we simply produce too much of everything for our own consumption,” said Bryan. **M**

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Dr. Dayna Harhay, U.S. Animal Meat Research Center
Rachel Edelstein, USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service (FSIS)
Dr. Mohammad Koochmaraie, IEH Laboratories and Consulting Group
Dr. Kerri Gehring, International HACCP Alliance and Texas A & M University
Dr. Barb Masters, OFW Law
Norm Robertson, North American Meat Association (NAMA)
Robert Hibbert, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP
Dr. Wendy Warren, AEGIS Food Testing Laboratories
Dr. Chris Braden, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (invited)
Dr. Dan Engeljohn, FSIS (invited)

FEATURED TOPICS:

Beef Pathogens and Human Illness
Microbiological Testing: Capturing the Right Data to Inform Your Process
Salmonella Research Update
FSIS Policy Update & 2015 Agenda
FSIS Field Operations Issues and Initiatives
Beef Safety and Regulatory Compliance: Situational Analysis
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WBDC's 2014 Field Day Celebrates Partnerships in Research

ABOUT 160 PRODUCERS and industry insiders spent a beautiful sunny day attending the 16th annual Summer Field Day hosted by the Western Beef Development Centre (WBDC) at the Termuende Research Ranch near Lanigan, Sask. in late June.

A full slate of scientists speaking on a wide range of topics under the banner of "Partnerships in Research" drew the large crowd to the ranch from across all three prairie provinces.

Paul Johnson of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's Regional Services Branch, helped Tim Oleksyn, chair of the WBDC Strategic Advisory Committee, open the event, along with two members of the Termuende family – Bob Termuende and Scott Schultz, who attended the day's events.

"This is an important event for the Regional Services Branch, and the Ministry," Johnson stated.

The Ministry of Agriculture has funded more than 50 per cent of the WBDC's organizational, project specific and strategic program costs, providing more than \$2 million in operating costs, and an additional \$1.8 million to project research funding over the past five years.

"The Ministry does this because we know the work of WBDC is important to the future success of the livestock industry," Johnson

said. "A growing livestock industry in Saskatchewan will help capture the opportunities and meet the challenges of a growing province."

"The work done at WBDC will help Saskatchewan create viable solutions to feed a growing world, in an environmentally sustainable way that results in safe food, responsibly produced," Johnson added.

Paul Jefferson, Vice President of the WBDC, was happy with the attendance at the Field Day, and with the interest the crowd showed in the various sessions.

"A large number of young people attended the Field Day this year," said Jefferson. "That just goes to show that there's a bright future for the beef industry in this province."

There was definitely a sense of youth to the event this year, noted Tim Oleksyn. Scattered among the all-ages crowd were some young producer families, and young research scientists. It was satisfying to see both producers and scientists in attendance, he noted.

"Events like the Field Day allow producers and scientists to mingle, which is good for both sides," Oleksyn said. "The scientists find out the questions that producers need answered, and the producers are able to take the research and put it to work on the ranch."

The keynote addresses by Dr. Kendall Swanson and Dr. Kim Ominski were very well received by the crowd.

Dr. Kendall Swanson of the Department of Animal Science at North Dakota State University spoke to reproductive success in young beef cows. According to Dr. Swanson, reproductive performance is the single-most important factor contributing to profitability in the cow/calf sector, and nutrition and management programs are key in maintaining a successful breeding program. Sustaining reproductive success is often the most challenging in young cows, but nutritional management throughout the year plays a key role in successful pregnancies for young cows.

Dr. Kim Ominski of the University of Manitoba spoke to the cost of extreme weather on breeding cows. Her presentation demonstrated the importance of adequate nutrition during the overwintering period, particularly during the last few winters where cattle producers have been faced with extremely cold temperatures. Proper management of cow nutrition during gestation can improve performance of the calf prior to weaning but can also impact performance long after. Her presentation included data from national surveys, comparisons between drylot and extensive overwintering systems, and changes in nutrient requirements for cattle as temperatures drop.

Information was presented on RFID tag retention, hay sampling for feed quality, supplementation strategies on pasture, trace mineral profiles in pastures, the impact of high rainfall on pasture quality, SafeGuard trial findings, and a demonstration of 3-D fencing designed to keep wildlife away from livestock feed sources. A research update on beef and forage projects from the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency, and a look at animal health wrapped up the day. ☐

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Red Meat Prices Will Sizzle Beyond The Summer

THE PRICE OF red meat at the grocery store has risen on the back of surging cattle and hog prices, and while prices will not drop in time for this BBQ season, consumers should begin to see some relief later this year, according to a new report from BMO Economics.

“Farm prices for hogs averaged US\$85/cwt between April and June, up nearly 24 per cent from the same period last year,” said Aaron Goertzen, Economist, BMO Capital Markets. “Meanwhile, cattle prices averaged \$146/cwt during the same period, nearly 18 per cent higher than last year. After adjusting for inflation, hog prices are now at their highest since the mid-1990s, while real cattle prices are higher than they’ve been since the early 1980s.”

Supply Management

Goertzen noted that a peculiarity of the livestock industry is that in order to expand supply, producers must first restrict supply to allow for animal breeding. “Much of the run-up in cattle prices has resulted from this herd rebuilding dynamically. Meanwhile, hog herd expansion has been hurt by the emergence of the PED virus last year, which is now estimated to have killed around seven million piglets.

“All of this has resulted in substantially higher red meat prices at the supermarket,” concluded Goertzen. “In the United States, the consumer prices of beef and pork were up 10.4 per cent and 12.0 per cent year-over-year in June, respectively, dwarfing overall food inflation of 2.4 per cent. Consumers are not alone; food processors, grocery stores, and the restaurant services industry have all have seen margins come under pressure as wholesale meat prices have risen. Hog and cattle farmers, on the other hand, are enjoying a much-needed renewal in profitability after several extremely tough years.”

The recent increase in red meat prices, while less encouraging news for consumers at the checkout, has brought many farmers in the industry a welcome boost to their business. Activity this summer has alleviated some of the lingering negative impact after dry conditions in the Plains earlier this year threatened livestock and crop supplies, with disease continuing to have an impact on pork producers and pushing up prices.


Canadian Prices Up Sharply

Goertzen noted that red meat prices have risen more sharply in Canada compared to the U.S., with pork prices up 16.6 per cent year over year and beef prices up 12.8 per cent year over year in June. Overall food prices were up just 2.9 per cent year over year. The 5 per cent year over year depreciation of the Canadian dollar in June is likely the main reason for larger price increases in Canada.

“Rising red meat prices will likely cost the average Canadian household more than \$100 per year,” Goertzen added.

“The livestock and red meat sectors are key economic drivers in the Canadian economy,” said Andrew Bowman, National Director, Agriculture, BMO Bank of Montreal. “This period of profitability will allow farmers to invest in their businesses with purchases of new equipment and facilities. This reinvestment will drive growth in not only the Canadian red meat industry, but also in rural communities coast-to-coast.”

Price Relief

The report states that price relief through an upswing in supply has not arrived yet, but it is coming. Consumer pork prices should follow suit, though perhaps with a bit of a lag. In contrast, cattle and beef prices will remain higher for longer, mainly because of the industry’s lengthy production cycle. Assuming that cattle producers began to step up breeding around the turn of the year, supply is unlikely to loosen materially until late 2015 at the earliest. 

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Optimism among Agri-business Owners Highest in Two Years

by Mandy D'Autremont

IN JUNE, OPTIMISM levels among Canadian agri-business owners were the highest they've been in two years. This probably sounds surprising given all the challenges this sector faced earlier in the year, with a long, cold winter and rail backlog that put pressure on many agricultural entrepreneurs. Following the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's (CFIB) June 26th release of agri-business optimism levels the sector was hit with even more difficulties, including severe flooding that has damaged homes, businesses and millions of acres of farmland, and restrictive changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) that will make it more difficult for many meat processors and other small businesses to find staff.

Since 1987, CFIB has been surveying its members about their expected business performance. CFIB's Monthly Business Barometer™ (MBB) reports business owners' optimism using an index that is scaled between 0 and 100. Optimism levels are usually between 65 and 70 when the economy is growing at its potential.



The index for the agriculture sector in June was at 64.2 – just below the measure for when the industry is growing at its potential and slightly above the national average among all Canadian businesses at 63.5. CFIB's MBB is used by a number of financial institutions, including the Bank of Canada and

Scotiabank, and is regularly reported by Bloomberg as an accurate indicator of the Canadian economy.

Hiring plans in the agriculture sector were at an all-time high in the June MBB, with nearly one-in-three (32%) agri-business owners planning on adding full-time staff within the next three months. However, in analyzing the main operating challenges for agri-business owners, it is clear many are having difficulty finding employees. The shortage of unskilled labour (24%) tops the list of operating challenges and the shortage of skilled labour is tied in second place along with foreign competition (19%). In fact, the shortage of un/semi-skilled labour is down just two points from an all-time high at 26 per cent in May.

Massive changes to the TFWP

On June 20th, the federal government announced massive changes to the TFWP, making the program more restrictive, costly, and introducing more red tape. The non-refundable fee to apply for a temporary foreign worker has gone from \$275 to \$1,000 per position, and employers will be forced to provide much more documentation.


While the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program (SAWP) and other primary agricultural occupations will be largely unaffected by these changes, we have concerns for the sectors in this industry that cannot use SAWP, including meat processors. With the shortage of un/semi-skilled labour already the biggest limitation to growth in this sector, these changes will make finding staff even more difficult.

CFIB members have acknowledged problems with the TFWP and have been strongly supportive of action to ensure it is used appropriately. In a letter to Minister Kenney in May, we proposed a number of changes, including better pathways to permanent residence for lower-skilled workers and stricter enforcement of existing rules. These recommendations were ignored.

Severe Flooding

With millions of acres of farmland under water and many communities across Manitoba and Saskatchewan impacted by severe flooding, we know entrepreneurs will find it challenging to meet their tax filing requirements. On July 7th, CFIB sent letters to the Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments asking for extensions on tax filing deadlines for flood-affected businesses. We're pleased both governments responded to our concerns and will waive penalties and interest for flood affected businesses if they miss provincial tax filing deadlines. The Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) has made a similar announcement for 2014 to help business owners who have been impacted by extreme weather conditions.

We all know government policy can either fuel or dampen optimism in the agriculture sector. While we realize government cannot control many global market issues facing farmers, they can certainly take steps to improve the regulatory and tax environment in which agri-businesses operate. Additionally, they can make sure Business Risk Management (BRM) programs are more transparent, timely and predictable.

Given the many challenges on the horizon, it will be important for Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Agriculture Ministers to ensure their policy decisions help fuel optimism in the Ag sector, continue to address our competitive challenges, and drive productivity in the sector over the long-term. 



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Established in 1971, CFIB is Canada's largest association of small- and medium-sized businesses, CFIB is Powered by Entrepreneurs™. CFIB takes direction from more than 109,000 members (including 7,200 agri-business owners) in every sector nationwide, giving independent business a strong and influential voice at all levels of government and helping to grow the economy.

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International Trade Show Looking for Canadian Participants

2014 China (Ningxia) International Beef and Mutton Products & Equipment Exhibition

THE CANADA-CHINA Meat Exporter Council (CCMEC) and Shineway International (Canada) Inc. (SWI) are coordinating the 2014 China International Beef and Mutton Products and Equipment Exhibition, a very special event to be held from October 23-26, 2014 in Yinchuan City, Ningxia, China.

CCMEC and SWI are working closely with the Trade Development and Cooperation Center of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), the Department of Commerce of Ningxia Hui Region and the Ningxia Expo Bureau.

The organizing committee is planning to invite Canadian bovine and ovine producers, packers and traders to participate in this exhibition. The goal of the exhibition is to assist in the expansion of: Canadian imports of beef and mutton; to help regulate the domestic beef and mutton market in China; and address the shortage of beef and mutton in Western China.

Canadian companies and organizations from related key areas in the production and distribution of beef and mutton are encouraged to attend the exhibition through the facility of a national pavilion which will provide unique cost-saving benefits:

The pavilion will be open and available to those companies and organizations directly involved in the processing and/or distribution of beef, mutton or lamb products, processing and slaughter equipment, cold-chain logistic equipment, dairy products and alcoholic products;

There will be no charge for booth space within the pavilion. Each exhibitor will be responsible for their own costs for design and/or construction of their displays if required. The

minimum size available is 108 sq. metres;

The organizing committee will solicit and coordinate networking and matchmaking seminars for potential buyers/sellers and Canadian exhibitors;

The organizing committee will set up a special area for Canadian exhibitors to promote and display their products;

The organizing committee will cover the costs for warehousing and cold chain logistics commuting for related Canadian exhibitors in the national pavilion for three days prior to, and two days after, the exhibition;

The organizing committee will provide free refrigeration equipment for the Canadian national pavilion.

This will be a unique opportunity for those in the beef and mutton industry to network on a wide scale with the potential of creating exciting new and profitable business opportunities in a growing and substantial Eastern market. Act now as space is limited and will be offered on a first come, first served basis. **M**

For more information, please contact CCMEC/SWI, the co-organizer in North America:

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Temple Grandin on Sustainability

By Cam Patterson

THE NEW DISCUSSION on sustainability as it pertains to the meat industry really refers to humane ways to raise and slaughter beef, pork, poultry, bison, sheep, etc. Where the animals natural way of living is not only the way to culture better meat but protect renewable resources and take responsible action along the entire supply chain. This means from farm to market we ensure eco-friendly practises are reflected in the everyday operations of the meat industry. This is the long term goal of sustainability in any renewable resource but how it is achieved when Canada leads the sustainable beef charge is why Temple Grandin had something to say about it all.

“I think we have to look at a lot of things in what is practical and sustainable when it comes to getting our animals to market,” she started off by saying when Canadian Meat Business spoke with her and Temple knows her animals. She wrote the book – literally – on improved animal handling and welfare that went on to become bestsellers in the industry. She single-handedly redesigned animal stockyard scoring and handling systems used all over the world, lectures throughout the globe, and currently teaches courses on livestock behaviour and facility design at Colorado State University and she is autistic.

So when the sustainability question is on the table for discussion, one has to wonder if the awareness Temple generated in her campaign to shift the meat industry to more humane, respectful livestock handling practices could’ve been the genesis to get beef and pork and chicken production on the bandwagon.

“We have to look at how these whole systems interact together and decide on what is the optimal thing to do,” she adds. “And then we have to do this without making it too expensive.”

She cited the recent government policies mandating better treatment of pregnant sows. “Gestation stalls have to go,” she agreed whole-heartedly. “But were not going to put the pigs outside. That’s not an economical solution.”

If we don’t pay attention to implementation and management costs, the whole idea of sustainability might not make it to

practical application. Yet the question seems to remain, how do we track and manage a sustainable program while at the same time full filling the mission of sustainability.

Another consideration is the level of production that even today has trouble keeping up to the demand. The industry on a whole has gone to extreme levels to ensure meat safety and health standards are maintained. Do these methods undergo sustainable scrutiny?

“I don’t think sustainable is pushing animal genetics to the point where the animals have no immune function,” she said. “I call that biological system overload. And yet look at all the diseases coming out anyway.” This of course refers to the PEDv pandemic that still threatens the pork industry. “We have to back off on some of the production we’re doing because that’s not what I’d call sustainable.”

The UK beef industry adopted the solution of breeding New Zealand Holstein cattle in regions where year round grass was the practical solution to rising feed costs. “They switched to the New Zealand type Holstein because the feed just got too expensive,” Temple said. While the other side of that equation is over selecting one specific cattle trade, say for instance, Angus beef, where leg confirmation problems are now being found, does not fall in line with the principles drafted by the GR SB. “When you go crazy on just one brand, one thing, well, you’re going to get problems.”

Bottom line is it all comes back to practical systems, and as far as Temple is concerned, that originates on the ranch. “These cattle done right on pasture is where sustainable starts,” she states. “But you have to do them right, you have to manage your pasture right. That’s the key to this whole thing.”

With Alberta cattlemen leading the Global Roundtable on Sustainability’s pilot program this year, we’re just going to have wait and see if we go from concept to application. One thing is for sure, it’s about time we’re doing it. And Temple agrees with the caveat, “How these systems interact together is the key to being sustainable.” **M**

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