



TEXAS CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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Multi-Stakeholder U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef Launched

A group of 43 U.S. beef value chain participants including producers, processors, retailers, foodservice operators, packers, allied industry and non-governmental organizations announced on Tuesday the launch of the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB). The multi-stakeholder roundtable will identify sustainability indicators, establish verification methodologies and generate field project data to test and confirm sustainability concepts for use throughout the U.S. The USRSB adopts an approach whereby social, economic and environmental considerations are balanced to achieve sustainable outcomes.

USRSB's mission is to advance, support and communicate continuous improvement in U.S. beef sustainability through leadership, innovation, multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Utilizing the definition for sustainable beef recently released by the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB), the USRSB will develop sustainability indicators relevant to the various beef systems in the U.S., as well as a means to verify sustainable progress in a transparent manner that can be shared. Similar to GRSB, the USRSB will not mandate standards or verify the performance of individual beef value chain participants.

"The Principles and Criteria adopted by the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef last fall were intended to stake broad parameters appropriate for a global initiative," said TCFA Chairman Tom McDonald. "Now, with the launch of the USRSB this spring, it is even more important for U.S. beef producers and cattle feeders to engage in the process of identifying the sustainability indicators for the U.S., in order to represent our economic interests and reaffirm our commitment to protecting the environment and helping our employees and communities be successful."

The USRSB is being directed by an interim board of directors that includes representatives from TCFA, Cargill, Beef Marketing Group, Micro Technologies, Merck Animal Health, JBS USA, McDonald's, Walmart, World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, Noble Foundation and the King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management. Participation is open to individual producers, producer associations, processors, retailers, foodservice operators, allied industry and civil society. Membership will be open to additional founding members until June 1, 2015. Learn more about USRSB at www.usrsb.org.

McDonald's Corp. Announces New Antibiotics Policy

McDonald's Corp. announced on Wednesday its plans to eliminate the sourcing of chickens raised with antibiotics important to human medicine in a program expected to take full effect over the next two years. The expansive effort is one of the first involving a major U.S. food company to make this type of commitment.

This new policy is reflective of the company's new Global Vision for Antimicrobial Stewardship in Food Animals introduced this week, which builds on the company's 2003 global antibiotics policy and includes supplier guidance on the use of antibiotics in all food animals.

While McDonald's will only source chicken raised without antibiotics important to human medicine, the farmers who supply chicken for its menu will continue to responsibly use ionophores, a type of antibiotic not used for humans that helps keep chickens healthy. The phase-out applies to the roughly 14,000 U.S. McDonald's locations and currently does not affect the company's 22,000 international restaurants.

To view the company's press release, visit <http://tinyurl.com/mcd-pr-antibiotics-policy>. To view McDonald's Global Vision for Antimicrobial Stewardship in Food Animals, go to <http://tinyurl.com/mcd-qvasfa>.

Senators Reintroduce Bill to Further Restrict Antibiotic Use

On Monday, Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) reintroduced the Prevention of Antibiotic Resistance Act (PARA), a bill previously introduced in June 2013 to require the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to withdraw its approval of medically important antibiotics used for disease prevention or control that are at a high risk of abuse.

Supporters say PARA addresses gaps in FDA's Guidance #213, which asks animal pharmaceutical companies to remove growth promotion claims from medically important antimicrobial drugs in food-producing

animals. Critics of the policy are concerned the drugs could be re-listed with new disease prevention labels and still be used at the same levels as growth promotion doses and without a limit on duration.

For more information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/sens-intro-para>.

Conaway Says Vilsack Shares Responsibility for Flawed Dietary Recommendations

House Agriculture Chairman Mike Conaway (R-Texas) and two of his subcommittee leaders wrote to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell on Wednesday expressing concerns about recommendations from a federal panel for the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans that Vilsack and Burwell will issue.

"Members of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee greatly exceeded their scope in developing recommendations," Chairman Conaway said. "The Secretaries share responsibility for these flawed recommendations, because they failed to keep the Committee focused on nutritional recommendations and away from areas such as sustainability and tax policy, which are outside of the Committee's purview.

"At a time when consumers are already subjected to conflicting and often contradictory nutrition and health information, the dietary guidelines must provide the public with realistic, science-based recommendations," he continued. "Given the grave concerns that have been raised, more time is needed for public comment, and those comments should be fully reviewed and considered." Read the letter at <http://tinyurl.com/letter-to-secs>.

TCFA needs you to submit comments today urging the Secretaries of HHS and USDA to reject this flawed report and to put lean meats back into the recommendation of an overall healthy dietary pattern, as it currently exists in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines.

To submit comments, go to <http://tinyurl.com/comment-dietary-guidelines>. There you will find talking points and drafted comments to use at your discretion. The comment period closes on April 8. The final 2015 Dietary Guidelines are expected to be finalized and published by the end of 2015. To view the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's full report, go to <http://tinyurl.com/dgac-report>.

Texas Ag Groups Oppose Bill Requiring Special Permits for Brackish Groundwater

The 84th Texas Legislature is picking up steam, and committees are starting to consider some of the over 3,500 bills that have been introduced thus far. TCFA staff is reading and analyzing the bills to determine their potential impact on TCFA members and what position, if any, the association will take. TCFA will provide a link in future editions of the *Newsletter* to the bills staff is tracking. The deadline to file bills is March 14.

One of the bills that TCFA is tracking, HB 30 introduced by Rep. Lyle Larson (R-San Antonio), would require groundwater conservation districts to issue special permits for the production of brackish groundwater. TCFA, along with Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, Texas Farm Bureau and other agriculture and landowner groups, sent a letter to the Texas House Natural Resources Committee members, including Rep. Larson, opposing the bill because it would give special treatment in the permitting process to the development of brackish groundwater for desalination.

TCFA and the other groups contend that there is no difference between potable and brackish ground water when it comes to who owns it and how it should be permitted. The Texas Water Code and case law are clear that all groundwater users have a constitutionally-protected right to a fair share of the groundwater under their land, with limited regulatory authority by local groundwater conservation districts.

TCFA and the other groups believe that brackish groundwater should be developed, but only under current law. Desalination projects should not receive special treatment with regard to production permits. TCFA will continue to work with Rep. Larson and the Committee to encourage desalination projects and more scientific analysis of the state's brackish groundwater resources.

A copy of the ag group's letter is available at <http://tinyurl.com/hb30letter>.

Conservation Program Applications Being Accepted at NRCS Offices Statewide

Applications for funding opportunities with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) are being accepted at all NRCS offices across Texas. NRCS in Texas has received its initial allocation of EQIP funding for 2015 and will begin ranking contracts after April 17, 2015. Producers interested in submitting an application for 2015 should do so before this ranking deadline.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that allows landowners to apply for financial and technical assistance for the application of specific conservation practices. Applications made after the deadline will be considered in the next funding cycle. Higher priority will be given to those applications that address national, state and local priorities and provide higher cost efficiency.

EQIP offers technical and financial help to install or implement structural, vegetative and management practices that can benefit the soil, water, air, plants, livestock and wildlife. For details, including eligibility requirements, visit the USDA Service Center office in your county. Service center locations and program information can be found on the Texas NRCS website at www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov.

Trans-Pacific Partnership to Benefit Ag

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released data showing the opportunities that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) could present in helping to boost agricultural exports. TPP is a trade agreement that could expand U.S. agriculture exports to some of the fastest-growing countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Fiscal years 2009 to 2014 represent the strongest six years in history for U.S. agricultural trade, with U.S. agricultural product exports totaling \$771.7 billion. Agricultural exports last fiscal year reached \$152.5 billion, the highest level on record. U.S. agricultural exports now support more than 1 million domestic jobs, a substantial part of the nearly 11.3 million jobs supported by exports all across the country.

An agreement on TPP would further boost exports of U.S. food and agricultural products. For beef specifically, Japan is the largest export market for U.S. beef and beef products, valued at almost \$2 billion in 2014. U.S. beef exports to the TPP countries currently face tariffs as high as 50 percent. Under the agreement, tariffs across the region will be cut, offering new market access opportunities to U.S. beef producers and exporters. In 2014, the U.S. exported almost \$4 billion of beef to the TPP region.

Trade is a vital contributor to the U.S. economy. More than 95 percent of the world's potential consumers, representing nearly 80 percent of the world's purchasing power, live outside of U.S. borders. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/tpp-benefits> to learn how the partnership would benefit the food and agricultural economy.

Former Agriculture Secretaries Speak up on TPA

A bipartisan group of former U.S. Agriculture Secretaries, representing all past Administrations from those of President Jimmy Carter to President George W. Bush, issued an open letter urging Congress to pass Trade Promotion Authority (TPA). They noted that TPA – which has been granted to all previous presidents since Gerald Ford – is critical for successfully negotiating new trade partnerships that boost exports and create jobs. Congress could begin consideration of legislation to grant President Obama TPA as early as next week.

In the letter, the former secretaries say, "Recognizing the importance of exports, we worked hard to open foreign markets, including negotiating new or expanded trade agreements with other countries. Trade agreements lead to expanded agricultural exports by promoting economic growth, removing trade barriers and import duties and developing mutually beneficial trade rules...Opening markets helps farm families and their communities prosper. Other governments also recognize this and are actively forging their own trade agreements. If the United States stands still, other countries will quickly move ahead of us."

To read their full letter to Congress, visit <http://tinyurl.com/former-ag-sec-letter-tpa>.

Past TCFA Board Member Recognized by the 84th Texas Legislature

Past TCFA Board Member Johnny Trotter of Hereford was recognized by the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate for his many achievements, including his induction into the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame, his tireless work as owner of one of the country's largest feedyards – Bar G Feedyard, horse breeder, community leader, philanthropist and AQHA President. Join us in congratulating Johnny on this great honor.

2015 Fed Beef Challenge

The 2015 TCFA Fed Beef Challenge will be held on Wednesday, April 15 at the Amarillo Livestock Auction. If your feedyard plans to compete for awards, cash and bragging rights, be sure to request your tags by Friday, April 3. In addition to the carcass contest to determine the best beef, there will be a live evaluation contest, steak dinner and activities benefiting TCFA's Education Foundation. For contest rules and the printable entry form, go to <http://tinyurl.com/tcfafbc>, or contact Jason Slane at (806) 358-3681 or jason@tcfa.org.

Calling All Junior Cattle Feeders

Steer validation for the 2015 Junior Fed Beef Challenge is currently underway, but it's not too late to request your tags! The deadline to validate steers is March 28, and official entries are due by Friday, April 17. Any student interested in the commercial cattle feeding industry, who is nine years of age or older is encouraged to participate. Students will compete for more than \$20,000 in scholarships, cash and prizes in four phases of the event, including carcass merit, record keeping, a written exam and oral presentation or interview. Find all contest details at <http://tinyurl.com/tcfajfbc>, or contact Jason Slane at (806) 358-3681 or jason@tcfa.org.

2015 TCFA Feedyard Camp

TCFA, in conjunction with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and West Texas A&M University, will host the 2015 Junior Fed Beef Career & Leadership Program, also known as “Feedyard Camp.” The program is open to incoming high school juniors or seniors who are interested in a career in the fed beef industry.

Participants will receive hands-on instruction about feedyard operations, as well as career opportunities in the fed beef industry. Activities include tours of commercial cattle feeding operations and a beef processing facility. They will learn the anatomy of a beef carcass and fabricate a beef half, as well as participate in a consumer beef taste panel. Students also have the opportunity to participate in a job shadow program at a local feedyard at the conclusion of the program.

Students can obtain an application from their County Extension Agent, Ag Science Teacher or online at <http://tinyurl.com/fy-camp>. Applications must be returned to TCFA no later than May 1. Selected students will be notified by May 15. The registration fee for camp is \$100, which covers all costs excluding travel to and from Canyon. Contact Jason Slane at jason@tcfa.org or Jayce Winters at jayce@tcfa.org with any questions.

TCFA Dues Rebate Criteria and Forms Available

If you fed 10,000 head or more in 2014, you may apply for a dues rebate. The rebate applies to the cumulative number of cattle fed by a single feeding entity. Rebate applications must be completed and returned to the TCFA office by Wednesday, April 15. For more information or to request an application, contact Jason Slane at (806) 358-3681 or jason@tcfa.org.

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