



TEXAS CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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TCFA Leadership Represented Members at NCBA Legislative Conference This Week

TCFA officers, board members and staff took your priorities to the Hill this week in Washington, D.C. during the NCBA Legislative Conference. The TCFA group met with a number of congressional delegation and federal agency officials to discuss issues like taxes and trade, environmental regulations, foreign animal diseases and dietary guidelines. Find a full list of issues at <http://tinyurl.com/tcfa-issues>.

TCFA leaders who attended include Chairman Tom McDonald, Chairman-Elect David Baumann, Vice Chairman Jim Lovell, Immediate Past Chairman Jason Hitch, board members Joel Bassinger, Michael Bentley, Jordan Levi, Jason Peeler, Andy Rogers and Brad Stout. Tom Portillo, DVM, also attended these meetings as well as others during the Conference.

Find a full set of pictures from the NCBA Legislative Conference on TCFA's Facebook page at <http://tinyurl.com/tcfafb>.



Pictured Left: TCFA leadership meets with Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture Mike Conaway.

Pictured Right: TCFA leadership meets with Senator John Cornyn.

Nutrition Scientist, Registered Dietitian Urges Secretaries to Reconsider Flawed Recommendations

The Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Agriculture (USDA) hosted a meeting on Tuesday for public comments on the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's (DGAC) report released in February.

Nutrition Scientist and Registered Dietitian with NCBA Shalene McNeill said the Advisory Committee's recommendation to exclude lean meat from a healthy dietary pattern is a historic move that ignores decades of nutrition science and all previous editions of the Dietary Guidelines. While the Committee defends the report saying lean beef is mentioned in a footnote, the recommendations are contradictory.

"Despite being charged with examining new evidence, the Committee based its conclusions on outdated, weak evidence from stereotypical dietary patterns," said McNeill. "Advising people to cut back on their red meat intake has had harmful consequences. As red meat intake has declined, we are consuming more empty calories and obesity rates have steadily increased. History has shown us that sweeping recommendations often get lost in translation and exacerbate obesity and nutrient shortfalls."

"It's time to take a step back and look at the real world application of these recommendations," she continued. "Americans have already moderated their red meat servings, and science reinforces that current consumption is within amounts needed to promote good health, protecting the population from a shortfall of nutrients and providing a satisfying form of nutrition."

The recommendations in the report are influential in the development of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and Secretaries Burwell and Vilsack have the responsibility to review all the scientific evidence in tandem with the recommendations before developing the guidelines.

TCFA needs you to submit comments today urging the Secretaries to re-instate the 2010 Dietary Guidelines recommendation on lean meat. To make sure your voice is heard on this critical issue, go to www.tcfa.org and click on the Dietary Guidelines banner at the top of the page. There you will find talking points and drafted comments to use at your discretion. The last day to submit comments is May 8. To view the DGAC's full report, go to <http://tinyurl.com/dgac-report>.

House Ag Subcommittee Discusses Termination of COOL as Final WTO Decision Nears

The House Agriculture Committee's Livestock and Foreign Agriculture Subcommittee held a public hearing Wednesday to examine the implications of potential retaliatory measures against the United States in response to its country-of-origin labeling (COOL) requirements for beef and pork.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is expected to make a decision on the COOL rule by May 18 in response to a U.S. appeal following a WTO compliance panel's decision declaring that Canada and Mexico were facing unnecessary burdens imposed by COOL regulations in labeling beef and pork muscle cuts for export to the U.S.

California cattleman Mike Smith testified before the subcommittee pointing out that his ranch's experience has mirrored the findings of the Kansas State University Study showing that COOL is a mandatory marketing program that consumers pay little attention to and has had no impact on beef demand.

"The K-State study actually measured how Americans vote," said Smith. "Americans vote with their pocketbook by purchasing beef, and the vast majority don't consider COOL in their purchasing decision. Why then would we incur the costs of a program that the consumer is not demanding?"

In his opening statement at the hearing, subcommittee ranking member Rep. Jim Costa (D-Calif.) said, "Mandatory (COOL) was destined not to work for a number of factors. While the supporters have argued the opposite, I think that we have to look at the facts. I think that we've seen an increase in production costs, we've seen impacts in costs to consumers that are factoring in meat purchasing."

Should COOL not be fully repealed, retaliatory efforts from both Mexico and Canada are likely on the horizon. According to Canadian Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, Canada doesn't "want to go the retaliatory route, but we certainly will should it be forced on us." He also noted that those retaliations could come in many different forms "from California wine to Minnesota mattresses."

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack says that the USDA has done everything possible with all involved to make the current COOL statute work. Though there are still U.S. parties on both sides of the issue, a full repeal of the rule is the most likely outcome.

Press Conference Shows Bi-Partisan Support to Eliminate the Death Tax

Senator John Thune (R-S.D.) yesterday held a bipartisan, bicameral press conference with Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Representatives Kevin Brady (R-Texas) and Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.) calling on Congress to permanently repeal the death tax. Senator Thune's press conference highlighted his introduction of the *Death Tax Repeal Act of 2015*.

He also introduced an amendment to the Senate's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Resolution to create a deficit neutral reserve fund to eliminate the federal estate tax, or death tax. The amendment was voted on and passed yesterday evening.

Following the vote, Sen. Thune said, "I'm pleased the Senate acted today in favor of this common-sense amendment, and hope we can continue promoting policies that give farmers, ranchers, and family business owners peace of mind of knowing that they no longer have to spend substantial sums on planning to minimize their death tax liability."

Representative Brady introduced similar legislation in the House, which passed the House Ways and Means Committee Wednesday by a 22-10 vote. Committee passage came after a subcommittee hearing on the topic where seventh-generation Texas cattleman Bobby McKnight testified on how the death tax affects cattle producers.

Meanwhile, a vote is planned to repeal the U.S. Estate Tax next week. The House Ways and Means Committee, chaired by Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), plans to vote on H.R. 1105 next week, which would repeal the current U.S. estate tax. However, the bill, which was filed by Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas), is unlikely to make it past the executive branch at this time, as President Barack Obama desires legislation for higher estate taxes as opposed to eradicating them.

Currently, the U.S. estate tax has a top rate of 40 percent imposed after an exemption of \$5.43 million for an individual or \$10.86 million for a married couple. According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, the government plans to collect around \$21.5 billion from estate taxes this year. For more information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/repeal-est-tax>.

Stratford Feedyard Recognized for 10 Years Without Lost-Time Accident

TCFA recognized Stratford Feedyard on Wednesday for their dedication to safety, as they have maintained a level of safety and attention to detail that yields 10 years without a single lost-time accident.

“We commend the work of Stratford Feedyard to ensure that their employees are able to do their respective duties safely and efficiently. Achieving a milestone like this one doesn’t leave room for cutting corners and clearly shows their ongoing commitment to a safe working environment,” said TCFA President & CEO Ross Wilson. “By continuing to grow and improve the practices that Stratford Feedyard has implemented, I am sure that this will be an exceptionally safe place to work for years to come.”

National Ag Week Recognizes Contribution of Food Supply

“Agriculture: Sustaining Future Generations” was the theme of National Ag Week held March 15-21. The week is used to spread awareness about the importance of agriculture throughout society. With the cattle industry being a large part of U.S. agriculture, the USDA shared as a part of National Ag Week that \$1 in cattle sales creates \$5 in additional business activity, indicating that the cattle industry is good for the overall economy.

“Ag Day encourages every American to understand how food and fiber are produced, the role of agriculture in a strong economy and our role in providing safe, abundant and affordable food. With over 729,000 beef producers, an economic impact of over \$44 billion, and over \$7 billion in exports, America’s beef producers make a major contribution, not just to rural America, but the economy as a whole,” said Colin Woodall, Chairman of Ag Day and National Cattlemen’s Beef Association Vice President of Government Relations.

The Ag Day Council strives to educate Americans about the importance of agriculture and help them understand the safety and abundance of the food supply that U.S. farmers and ranchers provide.

Rep. Slaughter Reintroduces Preservation of Antibiotics Legislation

On Tuesday, Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.) reintroduced the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), which would ban non-therapeutic uses of medically important antibiotics in food animal production.

In addition to PAMTA, Slaughter will be introducing the Delivering Antimicrobial Transparency Act (DATA), which would provide more information on the amount and use of antibiotics and other antimicrobials given to animals raised for human consumption.

DATA would require drug manufacturers to obtain and provide better information to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on how their antimicrobial drugs are used in food-producing animals. It would also require large-scale producers of poultry and livestock to submit data to FDA detailing the type and amount of antibiotics contained in the feed given to their animals.

Drought Tolerant Corn Varieties Studied

The *Journal of Crop Science* has published results from a study evaluating maize (corn) hybrids under drought conditions. Pioneer® brand Optimum® AQUAmax® maize hybrid seeds, over a multi-year study, helped farmers maintain stable yields during drought conditions and greater yields where conditions were favorable.

With water becoming one of the major factors in production agriculture, finding solutions to cope with lack of precipitation and restricted water use are of the utmost importance. According to the company’s press release, Optimum® AQUAmax® hybrids, on average, yielded 6.5 percent higher in water-limited conditions and 1.9 percent higher under favorable growing conditions.

Mark Cooper, research director, trait characterization and development at DuPont Pioneer, said, “Through these and related research efforts, we are making real progress in understanding what contributes to drought tolerance.” To download the full study manuscript, “Industry Scale Evaluation of Maize Hybrids Selected for Increased Yield in Drought-Stress Conditions of the U.S. Corn Belt,” go to <http://tinyurl.com/drought-res-corn>.

USDA to Extend Farm Bill Signup One Week

The USDA announced today that the deadline for farmers to reallocate their base acreage and update yield, and to make a choice between the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs will be extended until April 7.

According to a USDA official, anyone who already has made an appointment with the local Farm Service Agency office to discuss ARC/PLC doesn’t need to take further action. USDA’s reports show that almost 98 percent of producers have already updated yield and base, and close to 90 percent of producers have enrolled in one of the programs.

Deadline Approaches to Renew Expiring Conservation Stewardship Program Contracts

Farmers, ranchers and forest landowners who signed Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts in 2011 with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have until **Tuesday, March 31, 2015** to renew those expiring contracts.

About 9,300 contracts covering more than 12.2 million acres are nearing the end of their five-year term and can be renewed for an additional five years. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/cspnracs> to read more about the CSP program.

NCBA and PLC Accepting Fall Internship Applications

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the Public Lands Council's government affairs office in Washington, D.C., is accepting applications for the fall 2015 public policy internship. The deadline to submit an application is April 15, 2015. For details, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ncba-plc-intern>.

New Video Addresses Myths About Meat Color and Safety

The North American Meat Institute and American Meat Science Association have released the newest video in the Meat Mythcrusher series. The video addresses myths about meat color and safety, particularly the common misconception that beef has spoiled once it turns brown.

The video features Brad Kim, Ph.D., assistant professor of animal sciences at Purdue University, who explains the science of meat color and the many factors contributing the color of meat, particularly the role of oxygen and myoglobin, which can turn meat from a purple color to bright red to brown depending on oxygen exposure. View the video at <http://tinyurl.com/nami-myth-buster-vid>.

The Meat MythCrusher video series, which is now in its fifth year, seeks to bust some of the most common myths surrounding meat and poultry production and processing. Altogether, the videos have been viewed nearly 100,000 times. All of the videos are available at www.meatmythcrushers.com.

2015 Fed Beef Challenge

The deadline to register for this year's Fed Beef Challenge is right around the corner. If your feedyard plans to compete for awards, cash and bragging rights, be sure to request your tags by **Friday, April 3**. The 2015 TCFA Fed Beef Challenge will be held on Wednesday, April 15 at the Amarillo Livestock Auction. 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 ends Saturday, March 28. If you have requested your tags and plan to enter this year's contest, you need to have your official entries to the TCFA office by Friday, April 17. Students will compete for more than \$20,000 in scholarships, cash and prizes in four phases of the event, including carcass merit, record keeping, 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. Students can obtain an application, which must be returned to TCFA by May 1, online at <http://tinyurl.com/fy-camp>. 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, contact Jason Slane at (806) 358-3681 or jason@tcfa.org.

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