State & National Partnership
The Federation of State Beef Councils
Year in Review 2014
2014 Federation members to the Beef Promotion Operating Committee are: Top row, from left: Irv Petsch, Wyoming; Steve Hanson, Nebraska; Austin Brown III, Texas; Jerry Effertz, North Dakota; and Cevin Jones, Idaho, Federation chair and BPOC vice chair. Bottom row, from left: Scott McGregor, Iowa; Dawn Caldwell, Nebraska; Jennifer Houston, Tennessee, Federation vice chair; Terri Carstensen, Iowa; and Clay Burtrum, Oklahoma.
2014 Federation Division Board of Directors

Jones, Cevin
Houston, Jennifer B., Tennessee
Abbott, Christopher
Akin, James
Bartelse, Jurian
Barthle, Randy
Bayer, Matthew
Berry, Betts
Beyer, Jason
Blackmon, William
Bohn, Jerry
Brake, Linda
Brown III, Austin
Brown, Darrell J.
Burkholder, Anne
Deering, Gary
Downey, Barb
Effertz, Jerry S.
Evans, Morgan
Faithsoltz, Wayne
Farr, R D
Ferguson, Jon C.
Fleming, Tod
Galimba, Michelle
Gray, Rodney
Hanson, Dean
Hanson, Steve
Harms, Mark
Harvard, Marcus J.
Hauck, Dana R.
Head, Susan
Hinman, Judy
Hinz, Norman
Horstman, Joe
Inglee, Todd
Jefcoat, Larry R
Jones, Jerry
Jones, Larry
Jones, Scott

Chair (Idaho)
Vice Chair (Tennessee)
Nebraska Beef Council
Alabama Cattlemen’s Association – Beef Council
Veal (New York)
Florida Beef Council
Wisconsin Beef Council
Georgia Beef Board
Texas Beef Council
Arkansas Beef Council
Kansas Beef Council
Region VI (Arizona)
Texas Beef Council
New Mexico Beef Council
Nebraska Beef Council
Region IV (Oklahoma)
Nebraska Beef Council Revenue Seat
Iowa Beef Industry Council
Florida Beef Council
Virginia Beef Industry Council
Iowa Beef Industry Council
Kentucky Beef Council
Region II (Alabama)
Nebraska Beef Council
South Dakota Beef Industry Council
Kansas Beef Council
North Dakota Beef Commission
Idaho Beef Council
Wyoming Beef Council
Oklahoma Beef Council
Kansas Beef Council
Region III (Wisconsin)
Hawaii Beef Industry Council
Nebraska Beef Council
West Virginia Beef Industry Council
Region VII (Nebraska)
Kansas Beef Council Revenue Seat
North Carolina Beef Council
Kansas Beef Council
Illinois Beef Association - Beef Council
Idaho Beef Council
Arizona Beef Council
Indiana Beef Council
Colorado Beef Council
Mississippi Beef Council
Montana Beef Council
Kansas Beef Council
South Dakota Beef Industry Council
Kirkbride, Dianne
Knobbe, Pat
Lacey, Mark
Larson, Kristin M.
Leiber, Kenneth K.
Livingston, Sharon
Locke, Coleman
McGregor, Scott
McKee, Kristina
McNeley, Scott
Meyer, Angie
Miller, Sallie
Moon, John L.
Moyer, Jaret
Niess, Scott
Nissley, Darwin
O’Brien, Kyra
O’Brien, Susie
Oeschger, Dale
Para, Liz
Payne, Glenn
Pazour, Karla
Pitre, Sheila
Price, Clark
Rechel, Lucy
Ridder, John
Rings, David
Runyan, Larry
Schrunk, Richard
Schulthess, Wallace
Setzler, Jr., Carl B.
Sexten, Bill
Shelton, Dan
Sherron, Dick
Steinbeisser, Jim
Swanz, Linda
Swenson, Steve
Taylor, Glenn
Thomas, Sally
Tokach, Kathy F.
Viebrock, Sid
Walsh, Becky
Wehrbein, Buck
Weltmer, Philip
Wiese, Helen
Wiley, Garry
Wright, Thomas R.
Wynn, Weldon
York, Keith

Wyoming Beef Council
Nebraska Beef Council
California Beef Council
Montana Beef Council
Texas Beef Council
Oregon Beef Council
Texas Beef Council
Iowa Beef Industry Council
Tennessee Beef Industry Council
Idaho Beef Council
Oklahoma Beef Council
Colorado Beef Council
Minnesota Beef Council
Kansas Beef Council
Iowa Beef Industry Council
Pennsylvania Beef Council
Kansas Beef Council
Texas Beef Council
Michigan Beef Industry Commission
Washington State Beef Commission
Oklahoma Beef Council
South Dakota Beef Industry Council
Louisiana Beef Industry Council
North Dakota Beef Commission
Nebraska Beef Council
Missouri Beef Industry Council
Kentucky Beef Council
Missouri Beef Industry Council
Nebraska Beef Council
Utah Beef Council
South Carolina Beef Council
Ohio Beef Council
Texas Beef Council
Texas Beef Council Revenue Seat
Montana Beef Council
Montana Beef Council
Texas Beef Council
New York Beef Industry Council
Missouri Beef Industry Council
North Dakota Beef Commission
Region V (Washington)
South Dakota Beef Industry Council
Nebraska Beef Council
Kansas Beef Council
Iowa Beef Industry Council
Region I (Michigan)
Wyoming Beef Council
Arkansas Beef Council
Wisconsin Beef Council
Several events coordinated by the Federation of State Beef Councils over the past year have allowed state beef councils to maximize their collaboration not only with national programs, but with other state beef councils as well.

The **Partnerships in Action** conference at the start of each fiscal year provides an opportunity for state council managers to come together and assure that all checkoff efforts are operating as a team. More than 80 state beef council staff representatives attended the 2013 event, held at the NCBA offices in Centennial, Colo., Oct. 8-10. The conference allowed states to not only become better acquainted with national FY2014 checkoff programs, but gave the council managers and staff an opportunity to weigh in on the best ways the programs could be rolled out or extended within states.

An **Orientation** for new state beef council directors is held in the Spring to bring volunteer leaders at the state level up to speed on both the process for checkoff program development and the programs being conducted at the national level. During the 2014 orientation at the NCBA offices March 17-18, volunteers from 22 states got first-hand information on the structure, coordination and execution of the Beef Checkoff Program.

Finally, a **Partners in Planning** conference was instituted in 2014 to give state beef council staff members and executives an early start on the next fiscal year’s checkoff planning. At this year’s event in the NCBA offices June 2-3, about 40 staffers had a chance to find out more about consumer trends and attitudes and national strategies to address them, and provide input into program development for efforts in Fiscal Year 2015. As with the **Partnerships in Action** conference, **Partners in Planning** provided a preview of how state programs might benefit from, supplement and extend the national plan.
Dear Fellow Beef Producers,

In business we always want to know what’s on the bottom line. For the Beef Checkoff Program, the bottom line represents whether or not the return we get as cattle producers exceeds the cost, which is $1 for every animal we sell.

On that measurement alone you can be proud of your Beef Checkoff Program. Recent independent research shows a return of $11.20 for every $1 we put into the national program. That demonstrates the efforts cattle producers are funding through the promotion, information and research programs are really worth it.

Even more impressive, however, is how we got there. These programs weren’t ones we merely “purchased” with our checkoff dollars. The process for determining what programs should be funded, and at what amounts, is in the hands of producers themselves. So not only is the return on investment significant, the successful investments themselves were ones made by producers sitting on checkoff-directing committees.

For most of us, that’s not more important than the bottom line. But when you put them together, it’s very impressive that the process we operate under – which includes so much producer input – is tied to a result that is so substantial. Had we only funded the effort, and not been so integrally involved, it wouldn’t have been nearly as exciting. I’m very proud of the producers who have voluntarily given their time to make the decisions that have led to the program’s success.

Our new joint committee structure, which is more closely tied to the industry’s Long Range Plan, is giving producers even greater focus and input. State beef councils, too, are becoming even better planners, leaders and managers of state-directed checkoff funds. With the increasing sophistication in our process, I hope to see even better returns in the future. Let’s keep up the good work.

Yours truly,

Cevin Jones
Chairman, Federation of State Beef Councils

---

Federation Executive Committee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Region/State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Cevin Jones</td>
<td>(Idaho)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chair</td>
<td>Jennifer Houston</td>
<td>(Tenn.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region I</td>
<td>Garry Wiley</td>
<td>(Mich.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region II</td>
<td>Donna Jo Curtis</td>
<td>(Ala.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region III</td>
<td>Tod Fleming</td>
<td>(Wis.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region IV</td>
<td>Clay Burtum</td>
<td>(Okla.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region V</td>
<td>Sid Viebrock</td>
<td>(Wash.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region VI</td>
<td>Linda Brake</td>
<td>(Ariz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region VII</td>
<td>Steve Hanson</td>
<td>(Neb.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veal Rep.</td>
<td>Jurian Bartelse</td>
<td>(N.Y.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Seat</td>
<td>Mark Harms</td>
<td>(Kansas Beef Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Seat</td>
<td>Dick Sherron</td>
<td>(Texas Beef Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Voting</td>
<td>Heather Buckmaster</td>
<td>(Chair, Fed. Advisory Council)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Federation Initiative Fund Takes State Efforts to New Levels

A dozen states with key consumer populations are taking their efforts to new levels in 2014, thanks in part to the Federation Initiative Fund. The fund allocated more than $128,000 in fiscal year 2014 to 15 projects that have helped, or will help, extend efforts to reach the industry’s target audiences in meaningful ways.

“Our state beef councils have a unique capacity for personally reaching out to thought leaders. This can be more difficult when conducted at the national level,” said Cevin Jones, Federation Chair. “I think it’s this ‘boots-on-the-ground’ concept that makes the Federation so strong, and what makes the Beef Checkoff so effective and beneficial to the country’s cattle industry.”

Because of its ability to personally touch key audiences that communicate with or market to consumers, a noticeable aspect of many state programs is bringing these individuals to the message, rather than sending the message to them. Conducting tours and camps for media, chefs, foodservice operators, retailers and others who share beef’s message with consumers has been a common method of utilizing the funds.

In addition, state beef councils have used the funds to reach active millennials directly, or chosen to use up-to-date technology to assure that decision-makers are getting the beef message. For instance, runners have been targeted in two projects, and an App for hand-held devices has been developed for use by the foodservice industry.

The Federation Executive Committee meets twice each year to review applications for Federation Initiative Funds from state beef councils, and select ones it believes will have a chance to reach the most consumers. In 2014, eight projects were approved at the annual meeting in Nashville in February, while seven projects were approved in Denver at the 2014 Summer Conference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federation Initiative Fund • Round 1 (Approved at 2014 Annual Meeting)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Beef Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois Beef Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Beef Industry Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total approved in FY2014: $128,213</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federation Initiative Fund • Round 2 (Approved at 2014 Summer Conference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii Beef Industry Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Beef Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania Beef Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Federation Vision is “to build beef demand by inspiring, unifying and supporting an effective state/national checkoff partnership.”

Deliverable outcomes from this Vision are the multiple state beef council planning sessions conducted locally, and the collaboration meetings held nationally for state beef council staff and directors.
Every afternoon in homes across the country, the same refrain can be heard: “Hey! What’s for dinner?” And in the minds of the many consumers hearing that question, a dominant answer has been planted: Beef. It’s what’s for dinner.

Not just planted, in fact. Watered, nourished and cared for over the past two decades, the phrase – created and developed by the Beef Checkoff Program – is an example of highly successful promotion that is the envy of most major companies.

Can its true benefit to producers be quantified? And maybe more important, is it still relevant in this digital age?

“It’s invaluable,” according to Jim Boudreau, who was account director in charge of the Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner effort for the campaign-creating Leo Burnett agency from 1998-2002. “In the food category, it’s one of the most successful taglines ever.”

It wasn’t just an advertising campaign, says Mary Adolf, who was vice president of promotion at the National Live Stock and Meat Board’s Beef Industry Council at the time. It was integrated across just about every facet of the industry’s marketing program. “That really helped propel it forward very quickly,” Adolf says.

The Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner campaign focused directly on the beef product. The campaign hit the streets in May of 1992 with a 17-month, $42 million campaign that covered a broad range of marketing elements.

“It clicked almost immediately,” says Adolf. “The whole industry got behind it, and saw its potential. We worked hard to find a tagline that would endure and could be owned by the beef industry – something that could resonate with consumers and communicate what we were trying to convey.”

Epic Staying Power

Research shows that almost every year, more than eight of ten consumers have at some point seen or heard the tagline. About half of consumers can recite the beef industry tagline unaided – despite the fact that television advertising hasn’t been conducted for more than a decade.

“Most companies would love to have that kind of success,” says Adolf, who is now executive director of the International Pizza Hut Franchise Holders Association. “The Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner theme has stood the test of time. That’s a rare thing – to find a slogan that can do that. It’s almost unheard of today.”

Jennifer Houston, a beef producer from Sweetwater, Tenn., and vice chair of the Federation of State Beef Councils, agrees. “There are not too many brands that have had this kind of sticking power – and relevance,” says Houston, who has served on numerous checkoff committees since the 1980s. “At the time the first Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner campaign got started, I don’t think anybody thought it (the beef tagline) would have lasted as long as it has. We were so proud of what it became.”

STATE OF THE FEDERATION

Digital Marketing Campaign Builds on Popular Tagline
“Beef. It’s What’s for Dinner is worked into everything we do,” according to Martin Roth, executive director of marketing, advertising and new media for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, a beef checkoff contractor that manages the campaign for The Beef Checkoff Program. “It’s not just a tagline – it’s the brand. It’s the authority for all things beef.”

Roth says the credibility of the beef industry’s message has been enhanced significantly because of the beef industry’s efforts to develop an identity over the past two decades. “It’s established in the consumer mindset from all of the years of producer investment (through the checkoff) in it,” he says. “Consumers and others look to Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner and have confidence in it. It’s who we are. And it’s really paying off for farmers and ranchers.”

**Digital Communications**

Houston says because of the investment producers made through their Beef Checkoff Program at the beginning of the first campaign, a foundation has been established. “We don’t always have to come up with something new,” she says. “We already have something that we know works.”

She says all of those putting checkoff dollars to work can utilize the tagline as a “springboard for what they want to get across” – including state beef councils, which leverage the message for numerous efforts that reach consumers.

According to Houston the efforts only work, though, if the right message reaches the intended target. Today the method of conveying the message has changed significantly.

The 1992 campaign included an initial $20.5 million advertising budget, utilizing mostly television, magazine and radio. Today the strategy is to reach millennials through a targeted digital approach that shows up on their laptops, tablets, hand-held mobile devices and computers with information they need, when they need it.

“Digital is the lifeblood of today’s millennial,” according to Roth. “It’s the first thing they look at in the morning, and it’s the last thing they look at before they go to bed. A screen is always in front of them.”

Fortunately, says Roth, the Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner theme is just as effective with today’s consumer as it was when it was introduced in 1992. “Millennials have the same concerns as other generations have had – marriage, kids, finding and preparing meals that the whole family will enjoy,” he says. “But what has changed is the way they get their information. Digital is the way to reach this audience.”

**Right Audience, Right Time**

Roth says the payoff for the beef industry comes when a campaign moves people to purchase more beef more often. The Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner digital marketing campaign, which is managed by NCBA under contract to the Beef Checkoff Program, is key to accomplishing that goal for today’s generation.

“The ‘Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner digital campaign is the solution,” he says. “It targets the right people at the right time.”

Unlike mass media, which reaches
some people who have no interest in the product, Roth describes digital media as an “under-the-radar” approach that is “a different delivery system that is laser focused on the person needing beef information, or who would benefit from specific beef information. While it’s one-on-one communication through a consumer’s computer, it’s also across millions of people.”

The campaign aims to direct consumers to its flagship website – BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com. The site contains recipes, tips, nutrition, safety and other information consumers want and need. Various digital elements drive consumers to that site, including:

- **Banner Ads** on sites like AllRecipes.com and MensFitness.com, which inspire consumers to think about their dinner tonight with beef photos and recipes and bits of information. The ads and sites are targeted toward those consumers who have health and recipes on their minds;

- **Search Advertising** on engines such as Bing and Google, for people proactively searching for information on recipes and food information, but who may not have beef on their minds;

- **A Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner Facebook page**, with more than 830,000 fans who receive recipe posts with photos on a regular basis, and who are encouraged to visit the flagship website;

- **Collaboration with other established recipe and nutrition-related websites**, such as Martha Stewart.com, which will imbed beef recipes and tips directly on their sites;

- **Videos** that run before online television shows, using both recipe and non-recipe approaches;

- **Other “cutting edge” elements in digital marketing** that allow the industry to target millennial consumers who might be in the market to purchase beef.

All of these types of information streams are important, says Roth. “There are thousands and thousands of products out there, and they’re all on the internet,” says Roth. “But they remain hidden on the internet unless they’re promoted. We need to be targeting the right people, and targeting them when they’re in the right frame of mind.”

According to Roth, using a digital approach to marketing is very cost effective and efficient, since its aim is to focus on those who are in a position to purchase the product, not those who aren’t. “Digital provides a new, more surgical approach to the industry’s opportunities,” he says.

**A Rousing Start**

The Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner digital marketing campaign generated significant results for the beef community in 2014. After just over four months in the marketplace, more than 1.7 million consumers were reached through the campaign’s website, and the “no-recipe recipe” videos were viewed more than 5 million times on YouTube and other video online channels. Furthermore, associated social media sites hosted a total of more than 1 million engagements, such as likes, comments, shares, re-tweets and click-thrus to checkoff resources, such as recipes.

“We continue to engage consumers during their moments of meal planning, inspiration and decision-making, and results show we’re having an impact and that every interaction matters,” says Terri Carstensen, chair of the checkoff’s Domestic Consumer Preference Committee and a beef producer from Odebolt, Iowa. “Digital/social media is such a great tool because it is available 24/7.”

State beef councils in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Kentucky, Mississippi and Minnesota are using digital platforms from the national media buys. These states used digital media, such as Facebook and paid Google search advertising, to share positive beef messages with millennials.

Research shows that 97 percent of consumers have positive opinions about beef after visiting the Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner website.

**A Great Run**

Though they couldn’t have predicted how it would eventually be used, beef producers who sent the Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner theme on its mission can take satisfaction today in what it has created. “We didn’t have any inkling that it would become what it has,” says Houston.

And the value to beef farmers and ranchers? No question, says Houston. “It’s been priceless. It has really built tons of brand equity.”
States Take the Beef Message on Tour

State beef councils have often been taking their beef message to the people by doing just the opposite – bringing the people to the message. Farm to fork tours, where influential professionals who regularly counsel consumers on what should be on their plates, are showing that face-to-face encounters just very well could be the most effective way to change consumer attitudes about how the beef industry conducts its business.

From coast to coast, border to border, beef producers have been showing off modern beef production methods that leave tour participants amazed – in a very good way. And research shows the attitude shifts are significant.

“I believe if more people knew how farmers raise cattle, people who don’t eat red meat may start eating it,” said one participant of a Minnesota Beef Council tour, which was partially funded by a Federation Initiative Fund grant. The culinary students who were part of the tour were treated to not only a visual tour of the Lawrence Farm of Princeton, Minn., but a question-and-answer session with a meat scientist from the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute.

“Coming on this tour has opened my eyes to realizing how the farms are clean and how happy the cattle are,” said a participant in a pasture-to-plate tour for chefs, culinary instructors and foodservice professionals conducted by the Kansas Beef Council. “The farmers love their jobs and love what they do.”

A blogger attending a tour of the Masonic Village Farm in Elizabethtown, Penn., found her participation useful in her day-to-day efforts. “I took away more understanding of the farming end of the process, adding depth to my normal consumer outlook,” she said. Among the industry segments she experienced: a pasture operation, feedlot and a retail farm market — as well as the Beef Quality Assurance and environmental stewardship efforts along the way.

In almost all cases, pre- and post-tour surveys were conducted to determine just how well the messages are getting through. Before an Explore Beef tour in Florida, only 43 percent of tour participants would give cattle farmers and ranchers an “A” grade. After the tour? A full 87 percent said they would give farmers and ranchers an “A” for their efforts in raising beef.

“Our Explore Beef Farm to Fork Tours were more successful than we could have imagined,” according to Ashley Hughes, Florida Beef Council director of beef marketing and promotion. “The participants truly valued the transparency of the tour and the tour hosts, and the comprehensive coverage that was provided all the way from the pasture to harvest.” The FBC tours, too, were partially supported by the Federation Initiative Fund.

Fund grants also helped sponsor tours in Arizona, where Tiffany Hayes, Arizona Beef Council director of consumer education and producer communications, was enthusiastic about results. “Our tours were a resounding success,” she said. “It gave influential professionals the opportunity to see how cattle are raised, handled and harvested, and provided them a first-hand experience they can share with others.”

Oklahoma rancher Mike Armitage visits with South Korean journalists on a tour about production practices in the state.

Participants of the Pennsylvania blogger tour.
Responding to its market, the beef industry began making important changes in both perceived and actual nutritional properties of its products nearly 40 years ago. Those changes and the resulting impact they have had in marketing beef are more significant than most producers realize.

The industry’s first wake-up call came in 1977 when a U.S. Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs released the Dietary Goals for the American People. Among other things, that document recommended Americans decrease consumption of meat in favor of poultry and fish.

“All of a sudden, red meat became demonized,” according to Jeff Savell, Ph.D., university distinguished professor at Texas A&M University, who has been involved in beef industry research since the late 1970s. “We found this attitude was sometimes based on ancient data.”

Savell and colleagues, in fact, found the biggest impediment to good dietary recommendations at the time was faulty product information. For instance, Savell says that up until 1986, data for the beef Porterhouse Steak showed the cut had more than 42 percent fat – and this information was based on just a few heifers from the 1950s.

“It was a horrible lag in data,” Savell says. “We had outdated information for decades. Furthermore, we needed to define the concept of lean beef.” Compounding that was the fact the industry was actually marketing beef with too much fat – “dinosaur cuts, as we look at it today,” he says.

The results of the industry’s “war on fat” were impressive by any standard. Since the late 1970s the industry has demonstrated a 44 percent reduction in available fat (from 13 percent to 7 percent), and a 29 percent reduction in saturated fat contributed by beef per capita (from 13 percent to 9 percent). Furthermore, more than 65 percent of whole muscle beef cuts sold at retail today meet government standards for lean, and 17 of the top 25 most popular cuts sold at retail (including Sirloin Steak and Tenderloin) are lean.

Since the 1980 Dietary Guidelines for Americans were issued, external fat on retail beef cuts has decreased by 81 percent. Retail data show that sales of 90 percent or greater lean ground beef increased by 25 percent between 2008 and 2013.

All Hands on Deck

The “gate-to-plate” effort to increase leanness involved every segment of the beef chain – cattle ranchers and farmers who raised leaner animals, packers and processors who closely trimmed beef cuts, supermarkets and restaurants that offered a growing number of lean beef cuts to consumers, and researchers who made sure accurate data were used in calculating what was actually in the products. Also playing a critical role was the Beef Checkoff Program, which helped fund much of the research and many of the efforts to get information into the right hands.

“All Hands on Deck

The “gate-to-plate” effort to increase leanness involved every segment of the beef chain – cattle ranchers and farmers who raised leaner animals, packers and processors who closely trimmed beef cuts, supermarkets and restaurants that offered a growing number of lean beef cuts to consumers, and researchers who made sure accurate data were used in calculating what was actually in the products. Also playing a critical role was the Beef Checkoff Program, which helped fund much of the research and many of the efforts to get information into the right hands.

“Every pivotal point in this journey has had a checkoff element,” says Shalene McNeil, Ph.D., R.D., executive director of human nutrition research at the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, a beef checkoff contractor that manages checkoff nutrition research programs. “For instance, checkoff work led to collaboration that updated the entire gold-standard nutrient database for beef.”

With information in hand, the beef industry made a huge push through its checkoff program in the 1980s and 1990s to reach out to health professionals. For instance, a program with state beef councils and the American Dietetic Association (now the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics) starting in the late 1980s and continuing today provides seminars to local and state Academy groups on nutrient density and the new lean data.
From a production and processing standpoint, Savell says the key milestone was a major checkoff-funded National Consumer Retail Beef Study in 1986 that demonstrated consumers would buy more beef, and pay more for it, if they were offered a leaner product. “That was probably my ‘aha’ moment,” says Savell.

At that time, retail beef trim was about .5 inches of external fat. The information from the study created a “domino effect” in the retail industry to reduce external fat on retail cuts, Savell said, with one retailer trying to outdo the other when it came to closer trim.

The move by retailers to reduce fat trim led to increased efforts by packers to reduce the amount of fat going into the back of the store, according to Clay Burtrum, a cow-calf producer from Stillwater, Okla., and chairman of the checkoff’s Nutrition and Health Committee. The results were demonstrated by a checkoff-funded National Beef Market Basket Survey in 2005, which found that overall fat thickness for the cuts in individual store packages had been reduced to an average of .09 inches, 81 percent less than it had been just 25 years earlier.

“When you go to the meat case today, it’s a sea of red,” says Savell. “There is just no visible fat. Over time, we have seen a redefinition of lean.”

Taking a Different Tack
Are there still opportunities when thinking about lean beef? Yes, agree industry experts, but not necessarily in the direction it has taken over the past 40 years.

“We’re now to the point we just can’t get any leaner,” according to Savell. “Even if the only grade eaten by consumers was Select, it wouldn’t change fat intake (by Americans) appreciably.”

The industry’s message on lean could hardly be more positive. Today more than 38 cuts, when cooked and visible fat trimmed, have been shown to fit the USDA definition of lean, which is less than 10 grams of total fat, less than or equal to 4.5 grams of saturated fat and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per 3½ ounces. This compares to seven cuts just 20 years ago.

McNeil says, however, the industry’s best messages may sometimes get lost in the discussion on lean. “While the focus on lean is important, it’s only part of our great beef nutrition story,” she says. “All beef provides 10 essential nutrients, including high-quality protein, important to good health.”

Still, she says having the tremendous lean message is very important – even if it isn’t the particular message the industry decides to utilize in every instance. “Historically, it’s been an important focus,” McNeil says, “because unfortunately, when consumers and health professionals think of nutrition and beef, they often think of fat first.

“Today we’re suggesting to our state beef council partners they don’t need to talk as much about the numbers, because lean cuts have become so prevalent,” she says. “We need to stress that many popular cuts of beef are lean and all beef has 10 essential nutrients.”

While fat is still a leading barrier for consumers choosing beef, “the lean story is giving us many chances to tell a good nutrition story,” says McNeill. “We have a great opportunity to show that beef is surprisingly more lean and nutritious than [consumers] think.”
McNeill points to the Beef in an Optimal Lean Diet – or BOLD – Study as a means of doing that. The BOLD Study demonstrated that a diet containing 5 ounces a day of lean beef was just as heart-healthy as the government’s “optimal” diet based on chicken as a protein. It also showed that the diet with beef can lower total and LDL-cholesterol levels by 10 percent.

“We found that researchers were surprised not just by the results, but by the terrific nutrition profiles of the beef cuts,” McNeill says, noting that even beef cuts that don’t fit the government’s definition of lean can fit into properly balanced diets.

“The unintended consequences of such emphasis on lean cuts of beef might have contributed to a ‘good cut/bad cut’ perception,” says McNeill. “Because all beef has become leaner, any beef cut can be part of a healthy and balanced diet. People are really open to a balance of fat today,” she says.

Savell says it’s a matter of providing the right type of fat. “Consumers want taste fat, not waste fat,” he says. “We can’t avoid the need for a certain amount of fat for eating acceptability.”

Brave New Approaches

Efforts that help build positive messages about the nutritional benefits of beef have been managed for the industry and the Beef Checkoff program by NCBA. McNeill says that while it’s great the industry has developed a positive message about its lean products, it isn’t necessarily one it will use predominantly in the future.

“The nutrition landscape is getting more complicated,” says McNeill. “Now instead of ‘eat less fat,’ there’s more guidance to ‘eat a plant-based diet.’ So we have to start understanding how beef benefits the changing philosophies in diet and health.

“It also raises the question, what is the future optimal diet? We need to stress the point that beef is simply a better food – a great tasting, nutritionally valuable food for a better eating experience,” she says.

Staying engaged in the nutrition arena is still critical for the industry, says Clay Burtrum, who serves on the 20-member Beef Promotion Operating Committee representing the Federation of State Beef Councils. “It’s still very much an important issue because of today’s health awareness,” he says. “Consumers are increasingly aware of their diets.”

For that reason, Burtrum says he believes the Beef Checkoff Program needs to be involved. “We have to be forward-thinking about what is going to happen next,” he says. “We know there will continue to be Dietary Guidelines from the government, and we need to help make sure those are based on the most current, most accurate data. At the same time, we need to educate consumers about the nutritional benefits our products offer. Not just the lean, but the entire package.

“There are also new research studies that are suggesting that the beef that we have is a high-quality protein source, protein that is 50% of your recommended daily value. It also helps with building and replenishing muscles.

For a copy of a publication called Lean Matters on which this article was based, contact Wendy David at wdavid@beef.org.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Beef</th>
<th>USMEF Prioritized</th>
<th>USMEF Earmarked</th>
<th>NCBA Earmarked</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>SBC Revenue</th>
<th>Federation Initiative</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>32,296</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>67,296</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>67,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>1,641</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,641</td>
<td>1,641</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>164,000</td>
<td>102,900</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,392</td>
<td>268,292</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>318,292</td>
<td>318,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>11,392</td>
<td>619,992</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>619,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>2,301,600</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>87,783</td>
<td>2,429,383</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,429,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>69,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>69,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>213,052</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>231,652</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>231,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>243,189</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>351,789</td>
<td>11,811</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>363,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>1,584,634</td>
<td>426,400</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>17,783</td>
<td>2,037,417</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,037,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>12,804</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12,804</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>124,913</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>133,513</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>133,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>295,217</td>
<td>270,000</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>117,783</td>
<td>691,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>691,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>16,977</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16,977</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>239,189</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>17,200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>356,389</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>356,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>574,000</td>
<td>373,400</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>956,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>956,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>193,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>193,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,004,216</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,533,900</strong></td>
<td><strong>178,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>323,525</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,039,641</strong></td>
<td><strong>61,811</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,101,452</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net deferred investments adjustment</strong></td>
<td><strong>(17,758)</strong></td>
<td><strong>32,095</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>29,058</strong></td>
<td><strong>43,395</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,117</strong></td>
<td><strong>58,512</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,986,458</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,565,995</strong></td>
<td><strong>178,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>352,583</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,083,036</strong></td>
<td><strong>76,928</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,159,964</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>