



National Cattlemen's  
Beef Association

# There is No Alternative to BEEF

## Kendal Frazier, NCBA CEO

Today there are more protein choices for consumers than ever before. In addition to the popular animal proteins beef, chicken and pork, newer forms of alternative proteins made from plants, such as soy and peas, are making their way into the marketplace. While alternative proteins and veggie burgers have existed for decades, some of these newer products have significant financial backing resulting in aggressive marketing and great media fanfare.

But let's look at what is really going on in the marketplace.

### Consumers Overwhelmingly Choose Beef Over Alternatives

Meat alternatives represent just a tiny fraction of pounds sold; barely registering at 0.1% share in 2018. Looking specifically at beef alternatives, the share is only 0.5%, with beef owning the other 99.5% of market share.

Regarding consumption, beef's 2019 annual projection is more than 58 pounds per capita versus beef substitutes measuring just a few ounces per capita. For beef, 2019 will mark the fourth straight year per capita consumption increased from a low of 53.9 pounds in 2015.

This type of growth bodes well for beef demand as the annual U.S. Retail Beef Demand Index has increased by almost 15% since 2012. This increase in demand is being driven by consumer expenditures on beef, which reached an all-time high in 2018 of more than \$105 billion in sales.

While this is a great story to tell, it's important to note that chicken remains a formidable force and our number one protein competition. In terms of share of total meat and poultry consumption, chicken is in the lead with 42% share, or 93 pounds per capita, compared to beef's 26% share, or 58.3 pounds per capita. Keep in mind that the same companies that are marketing new beef alternatives are also marketing chicken alternatives.

Regarding consumer attitudes about meat alternatives, research has found that consumers consider beef one of the very best sources of protein, and plant-based and lab-grown alternatives are considered some of the worst. While there is interest in these substitutes among some consumers, research shows that those who have tried them did so while continuing to enjoy beef. In other words, very few, if any, are replacing the beef they love with substitutes.

## We Aren't Resting on our Laurels

Despite the low market share of alternative protein today, we aren't resting on our laurels. We must continue to compete every day for the consumer dollars spent on protein. We have a two-pronged strategy: Protect Beef's Nomenclature and Position Beef as the Top Consumer Protein.

### Ensuring a Level Playing Field for Beef through Regulatory Channels

First and foremost, to compete successfully, we must have a level playing field when it comes to the rules of food marketing and production. NCBA's policy division, using member dollars, is leading efforts in Washington D.C. to ensure meat alternatives – both current plant-based products and potential future lab-produced products – are properly marketed and regulated.

First, we are urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to work together to enforce existing labeling laws for plant-based protein products so that beef's nomenclature is protected. The FDA has the power to act against companies that use misleading labels to confuse consumers about the true nature of their product. We are making sure they use that authority when it comes to beef. If they don't, we will use all our options, including legal, to fight against false claims. We are also supporting NCBA affiliates efforts at the state level. Today, more than 25 states across the U.S. that have introduced various bills (eight have passed) and several states have passed resolutions designed to protect beef's nomenclature.

Second, since no framework currently exists for regulating lab-grown products, we pushed hard and were successful in ensuring that the USDA leads the regulatory oversight for labeling and inspection, just like for animal protein products. As government agencies develop this new regulatory structure, our mission is to ensure fairness for producers and consumers.

We are also helping lawmakers understand how beef is produced in the U.S. and the positive benefits it contributes to our diets and to our environment, so they do not pass ill-informed legislation that could put beef at a disadvantage. For more information on our efforts in Washington, [click here](#).

### New Ads Take Meat Substitutes Head On in the Marketplace

Research shows that when consumers choose meat alternatives, they do because of what they perceive as health, safety, or environmental reasons. So, we are tackling those concerns head on.

NCBA, as a contractor to the beef checkoff, is leveraging the iconic, checkoff-funded *Beef. It's What's for Dinner.*® brand to tell the story of real beef and the people who produce it. We are showcasing the unique attributes of beef to distinguish it from ALL other protein choices.

New advertisements using tongue-in-check humor and beef's swagger address alternative proteins head on. Check out these ads.

- ["Nicely done beef, you know a protein packed meal looks nothing like a shake."](#)
- ["Nicely done beef, you've proved that meat substitutes are just that. Substitutes."](#)
- ["Nicely done beef, you provide the benefits of a protein bar without tasting like one."](#)

## Ads Show the People Behind Beef Production

To leverage the trust that consumers have in farmers and ranchers, checkoff-funded ads demonstrate the care that farmers and ranchers take in producing beef. Our ["Rethink the Ranch"](#) series of video ads highlight how producers care for their land and their animals and have had more than 15.5 million video views. Filmed on farms and ranches across the country, these video ads help consumers understand the unique attributes of beef production.

## Leveraging NBC's American Ninja Warrior Popularity

NCBA, through the beef checkoff, teamed up with Lance Pekus, the Cowboy Ninja – a rancher from Idaho who has competed on the popular American Ninja Warrior show on NBC, to help consumers learn why beef is a great source of protein. [A series of video ads show how the Cowboy Ninja gets his strength from ranching, family and beef.](#) In addition to advertisements and videos featuring Lance, he is also an ambassador to health and diet professionals to help them understand what distinguishes beef as the top protein for strength in today's consumers' busy lives. These videos have had more than 19 million video views.

## There's No Faking These Results

These ads, along with a host of others, are appearing on all major digital channels to reach targeted consumers and push the consumer to the [BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com](#). website for additional information. Our research shows the ads are working. With a record 15 million visitors to the website since October 2017, more than 88 million video views and more than 160 million consumer touchpoints annually.

What's more is that we're changing perceptions as a result of these efforts and more. Today, more consumers say that beef is the top protein. And, more consumers are aware of the *Beef. It's What's For Dinner.* brand. When they're more aware of the brand, they feel better about and are more likely to eat more beef.

## Retail and Foodservice Companies get the Facts about Beef

Beef continues to be extremely valuable to the retail and foodservice channels. A recent study found that when beef is part of a consumer's grocery basket, retailers enjoy a considerable increase in the total basket's value. In fact, carts with beef generate 44% more sales across the store than carts with chicken. Beef substitutes fare even worse. Carts with beef contribute almost 20 times as many dollars to retailers as do carts with beef substitutes.

While more foodservice operators are beginning to include meat alternatives on their menus, there continues to be far more beef items in food service than meat alternatives. In 2018, \$31 billion of beef was sold through foodservice outlets compared to \$99 million of beef substitutes.

Through our work directly with retailers and foodservice companies, we know they get questions from consumers about food production, including questions about beef. To ensure they have the right answers for beef-related questions, our channel marketing team is getting the facts about beef directly to these companies through an aggressive communications and outreach program, which position beef as the top protein. You can see some of the ways we're communicating with our supply chain partners through our [Beef. It's What's For Dinner. LinkedIn page](#), which is aimed at our business audience.

Consumers also have questions about how to buy and prepare beef. Today, consumers expect on-demand answers to their questions about anything at any time. Information about beef is no different. So, to help consumers, through the beef checkoff, we launched "Chuck Knows Beef," the first virtual assistant powered by Google Artificial Intelligence, to give consumers the answers to their questions through their smartphones or smart speakers where and when they need it. [Click here to learn more about Chuck](#) or ask him a question at [ChuckKnowsBeef.com](#) – you might be interested in his answer if you ask him "What are meat substitutes?"

## Fighting Back Against False Facts

Some plant-based and cell-cultured meat advocates have been using false claims about beef, particularly when it comes to the impact of beef production on climate change. Checkoff-funded research is providing the information we need to demonstrate the falsehood in their claims. For example, a recent report by the EAT Commission in Europe grossly misrepresented beef's important role in the diet and used misleading information regarding beef's impact on climate change. NCBA, working with others in the meat industry, fought back hard. The result is that the report has been discredited by leading scientists around the world. A special [webpage](#) was developed to help reporters and others get the facts around beef's role in a healthy, sustainable diet more easily. Through our checkoff-funded Digital Command Center, we are monitoring several hundred media outlets and social media sites daily for misinformation about beef. NCBA staff is also aggressively responding to introductions of alternative meat products at major burger joints. A recent [OpEd](#) by NCBA President Jennifer Houston is a great example of how our policy communications team is correcting misinformation.

## Going Forward

Yes, there is a lot of chatter going on right now about some new meat alternatives items available to consumers. We don't like it either. So, we have been addressing it very aggressively and will continue to do so going forward. We will use the influence we have in Washington D.C. to ensure a level playing field for beef production and marketing, and we are using the equity behind the 25-year old Beef. It's What's for Dinner. brand to sell beef on its merits in new and interesting ways.

Consumers love the taste of beef. Consumers hold beef producers in high regard. And when it comes to nutrients, we feel that beef offers the most for today's consumers. There really is no alternative.