

Uncheck That Checkoff Idea

Vilsack Withdraws Proposal For Second Beef Checkoff After Widespread Opposition

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

If one checkoff is good, then two might be better.
Or, maybe not.
Earlier this fall in October, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack proposed creating a second beef checkoff program that would have operated separately from the much-supported beef checkoff that has been in place for nearly 30 years, in response to the lack of progress made by the Beef Checkoff Enhancement Working Group to reach agreement on whether to raise the current beef checkoff from \$1 per head to \$2 per head.

The current beef checkoff was created in 1985 when Congress passed the Beef Promotion and Research Act. With the \$1-per-head checkoff, producers as a whole determine how the funds are allocated to beef promotion and research efforts, like the "Beef: It's What's For Dinner" marketing campaign and the development of the popular flat-iron steak.

According to the Nebraska Cattlemen in Lincoln, Nebraska, close to 80 percent of American producers support the 1985 beef checkoff program, and an independent study by Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, conducted earlier in 2014 found that for each \$1 invested through the beef checkoff, the program returned \$11.20 to the beef industry.

"Over the years, the beef checkoff program has greatly benefitted those who pay into and direct its work," said Dave McCracken, president of the Nebraska Cattlemen.

As it was, the new proposed beef checkoff by Vilsack — which would've been established under the 1996 General Commodity Promotion, Research and Information Act — and the current 1985 beef checkoff would both be in existence simultaneously for three years before a producer referendum would be allowed to take place to decide whether to continue with the two checkoffs.

That was apparently not a gamble beef producers were willing to take.



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

"Cattlemen and women will under no circumstances support any attempt to supplement, replace or enhance the beef checkoff with the 1996 Act," said Jeff Rudolph, present of Nebraska Cattlemen and a producer in Cozad, Nebraska. "The trust that producers have for the beef checkoff is rooted in the producer oversight stipulated by the 1985 Act, as opposed to federal government control that is the basis of the 1996 Act. We oppose greater government control of our industry and heavy handed, federally mandated action."

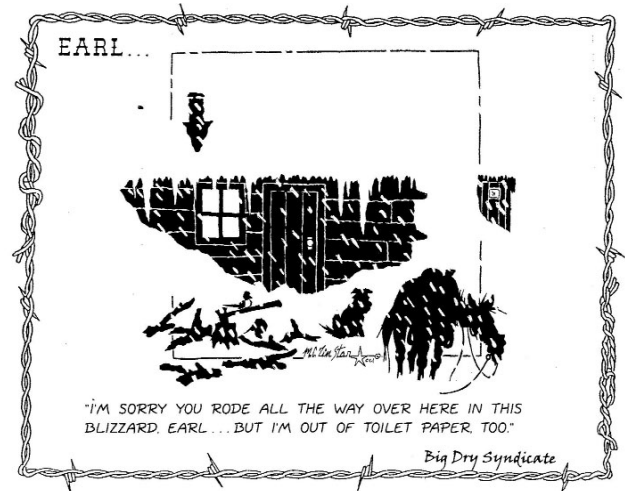
After widespread opposition from producers, just a few days before Christmas Day, Vilsack decided to withdraw his proposal for a second beef checkoff. Vilsack told the Nebraska Cattlemen that he intends to allow the Working Group to continue seeking a solution on its own.

"We greatly appreciate Secretary Vilsack's action, allowing the industry stakeholders to continue working together to enhance the beef checkoff program," said Bob McCan, president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and a producer in Victoria, Texas. "All of us involved in this process have been

very mindful of the tremendous producer support of the checkoff, and we will continue to work with the Beef Checkoff Enhancement Working Group and our members to enhance the program while building on that support."

While a second, government-mandated beef checkoff was definitively not the solution to moving the Beef Checkoff Enhancement Working Group forward, changes are likely in the future if the Working Group is unable to find ways to stretch the current checkoff amount to sufficiently cover expenses for promotional and scientific efforts.

"Nebraska Cattlemen understands that the \$1-per-head assessment doesn't stretch as far as it once did, and that's why we'll continue the conversation about enhancement of those resources," McCracken said. "We appreciate the continued focus on increasing the reach of our grassroots effort through enhanced support of the existing program. The investment is vital and ensures we have the promotion and research funds required for a thriving beef industry."



Centerville Man Elected AU President

SIOUX FALLS — Agriculture United for South Dakota hosted their annual meeting in Sioux Falls on Tuesday, Dec. 9, at the Hilton Garden Inn South. At the board meeting, Richard Vasgaard of Centerville was unanimously elected as the new President of Ag United for South Dakota.

Vasgaard's interest in farming started young, and he has been active on the farm his entire life. After graduating from SDSU in 1972 with a degree in plant science, Vasgaard returned to the farm full time. Presently, Vasgaard and his wife Joyce farm near Centerville with their son, Thomas, and Vasgaard's father, John, helps out when he is able. On this family farm they raise corn, soybeans and alfalfa. They also do custom silage cutting and other custom work.

Vasgaard became a member of the Ag United board as a representative from Farm Bureau four years ago.

He states, "I'm excited to take on a new role within the Ag United board because of the positive experience I've had in the past. I think it will be a great opportunity to work cooperatively with the many different segments of South Dakota agriculture."

Community involvement is important to Vasgaard. He is active as a board member of Farm Bureau, the Chapter 21 Red Power Club, the Turner, Lincoln and Clay Water District, his local church and is the supervisor for Turner Township.

300-Bushel Barrier Topped In Contest

SIOUX FALLS — The elusive 300-bushel-per-acre corn barrier has been broken.

Riverside Farms of Huron has set a South Dakota record with a corn yield above 308 bushels per acre, the top mark in a contest sponsored by the South Dakota Corn Growers Association in conjunction with the 2014 National Corn Yield Contest.

Bennett Waldner submitted the contest entry in the irrigated-ground category on behalf of Riverside Farms. South Dakota had 119 entries in four categories this year.

Corn yields have grown consistently in recent decades and 300 bushels became a contest target for South Dakota farmers. Winning yields crept closer to that elusive mark and topped 290 bushels-per-acre in recent years.

Here's a list of winners, including seed brand, hybrid and yield.

- **Non-Irrigated:** 1 — Scott McKee, Hawarden, Iowa; Pioneer; P1151AM; 286.81; 2 — Huron Colony, Huron; Dekalb; DKC52-61RIB; 285.11; 3 — Dean Bosse, Elk Point; Pioneer; P1151AM; 254.54

- **No-Till/Strip-Till Non-Irrigated** — 1. Nathan Hoelt, Stratford; Dekalb; DKC48-12RIB; 261.49; 2. Swisher Inc., Groton; Croplan; 4099SS/RIB; 244.41; 3. Swisher Inc. Groton; Renk; RK568VT3P; 235.05

- **Irrigated:** 1 — Riverside Farms, Huron; Pioneer; P0533AM1; 308.92; 2 — Breeding Farms, Chamberlain; Dekalb; DKC62-97RIB; 279.95; 3 — Breeding Farms, Chamberlain; Dekalb; DKC58-89RIB; 276.71

- **No-Till/Strip-Till Irrigated:** 1 — Riverside Farms, Huron; Pioneer; P0533AM1; 289.19; 2 — Breeding Farms, Chamberlain; Dekalb; DKC63-33RIB; 261.68; 3 — Lower Brule Farms, Pukwana; Dekalb; DKC59-90RIB; 260.25

Replacement Heifer Webinars Set

BROOKINGS — Current economic conditions in the cow/calf sector are sending strong signals for expansion. At the same time cattle values have risen to unprecedented levels, and therefore increasing the importance of best management practices to increase the likelihood of success.

SDSU Extension will host a five-part webinar series to help producers make the best decisions for their operations regarding heifer management and retention strategies.

The 2015 webinar series will run Jan. 14, 21, 28, Feb. 11 and Feb. 18. All sessions will start at 12:30 p.m. CST and run for one hour. These can be viewed from anywhere with Internet access, allowing producers the ability to take advantage of these learning opportunities without leaving the ranch. Participants will be able to type in questions for the presenters to answer.

All sessions also will be recorded for later viewing if participants aren't able to catch one of the sessions.

To register online, visit <http://iGrow.org/store>.

Farm Service Agency

Farm Bill Informational Meetings Set

BY DAVID CHARLES
County Executive Director

Your FSA office has two Farm Bill meetings scheduled in January.

SDSU Extension Service and FSA have partnered up to inform farmers and ranchers about the tools available to assist in making a program election this winter. The SDSU meeting is scheduled for Jan. 13 at 1 p.m. at JoDean's restaurant in Yankton. FSA staff will provide program information and SDSU will demonstrate several decision tools.

There will also be a meeting on Jan. 6 at 1 p.m. at JoDean's in Yankton. Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to attend these meetings to learn about the new Farm Bill.

IMPORTANT FARM BILL DEADLINES

Producers have until Feb. 27 to update their bases and yields at the FSA office. This update is very important and will not be available after this deadline.

Your FSA office encourages you to update these bases and yields as soon as possible to avoid the rush in February. For the latest on 2014 Farm Bill programs administered by FSA, please visit our Farm Bill website at www.fsa.usda.gov/farmbill.

Dates associated with the new Farm Bill that farm owners and producers need to know:

- Jan. 6, 2015 — Farm Bill meeting, 1 p.m. at JoDean's restaurant.

- Jan. 13, 2015 — SDSU Extension Farm Bill meeting, 1 p.m. at JoDean's restaurant.

- Nov. 17, 2014, to Feb. 27, 2015 — Update bases and yields.

- Nov. 17, 2014, to March 31, 2015 — Producers make a one-time election between ARC and PLC for the 2014 through 2018 crop years.

- Mid-April 2015 through summer 2015 — Producers sign contracts for 2014 and 2015 crop years.

For more information on FSA, please contact your local USDA Service Center or visit us online at www.fsa.usda.gov.

Commentary

CDC's Raw Milk Stats Tainted By Biased Comment

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

It's been a while since I wrote anything about raw milk.

I don't drink raw milk on a regular basis. I did as a child on the farm, and I did for a while when my oldest daughter's cow milk allergy led us to milk a couple goat does for our family dairy needs until she outgrew her health issues. But to be honest, I'm quite fond of picking up an easy gallon of milk at the grocery store and we no longer have goats for family milk consumption.

But that doesn't mean I don't think other people should have the right to drink raw, or unpasteurized, milk as they see fit.

I do feel consumers should be allowed to make an informed decision knowing all the supposed and real benefits as well as the risks that drinking raw milk might pose to one's health.

In Nebraska, on-farm raw milk sales are allowed. In South Dakota, raw milk can be purchased on the farm as well as through farmer-direct delivery to the consumer, as long as the milk is clearly labeled as "raw" and the farms have a permit for milk production. In neither state is it legal to sell raw milk by retail means.

There are a lot of purported benefits, from improvement of lactose intolerance to overall healing properties, of consuming unpasteurized milk. However, there are risks, too.

A new study from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention reports that from 2007 through 2012, there were 81 raw milk-related illness outbreaks, which resulted in an average of 13 cases per year.

Compare this with CDC reports from 1993 through 2006, which found an average of three outbreaks per year.

The CDC study also notes that the increase in raw milk-related illness outbreaks



Rita BRHEL

was concentrated in states that have legalized the sale of raw milk. In conclusion, the CDC saws the number of cases has more than quadrupled in the last five years.

Beth Briczinski, vice president of dairy foods and nutrition for the National Milk Producers Federation, responded with: "The more raw milk that is available to

people, the more people become sick." Ouch! And unfair.

The CDC stats seem clear cut, but nothing ever is when it comes to research. There are many variables not explored, and Briczinski's conclusion doesn't even make sense: People get sick all the time, from a lot more than raw milk, and disease susceptibility is a lot more complex than sickness being a matter of introducing a pathogen. It's unfair to even suggest that illnesses from pathogens common to unpasteurized milk are what are behind these outbreaks — without additional studies to rule out other possibilities.

What would be more appropriate is to make mention of the "association" or the "suggested connection" or "apparent link" between these illness outbreaks and raw milk sales, but also to list the many other unexplored factors, one being the number of sources of raw milk in a given illness outbreak area. Was it one farm that was responsible, or several? Was the raw milk delivered in farm-provided containers or was the milk placed in containers brought by the consumer? Was the raw milk produced by a farm that also has a milk production permit and sells pasteurized product? How long was the raw milk stored, and stored how, before sold

to the consumer? What time of the year was this raw milk consumed? What was the age and health of the consumer?

See, there are lot more variables that the CDC stats — and Briczinski's comments — don't acknowledge that really could make a lot of difference in how we read the data.

There's no need for Briczinski to be sensationalizing this CDC report. Her "scare tactic" approach really only reveals her bias on the issue, rather than respect for the scien-

tific model that, by answering all the questions attached to the many variables in any given study, help to find true health recommendations that benefit our lives.

So, for me, the jury is still out on raw milk until I see more evidence for or against its safety without biased comments from obvious raw milk opponents.

To Our Readers

The *Press and Dakotan* is updating the Community Calendar, which runs on the Monday and Thursday Life Pages. **ALL EVENTS** that are currently listed in the Community Calendar will be deleted as of Monday, January 13. If you wish to have your event listed after Monday, January 13, you must send an updated listing that includes: Name of your group, day of meeting, time of meeting, location of meeting and contact phone number. Updated listings should be emailed to news@yankton.net or mailed to: Press and Dakotan, C/O Jordynne Hart, 319 Walnut Street, Yankton SD 57078. Questions may be directed to Shauna or Jordynne at 605-665-7811.