

Wisconsin BEEF COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin Hosts Central American Importers



In early September, the Wisconsin Beef Council hosted a trade team from Central America to showcase the Wisconsin beef industry, introduce them to the packers in our state, and showcase trends in retail and foodservice that are occurring in the U.S. The effort was coordinated in conjunction with the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF.) The trip was made possible through

the Beef Checkoff, as well as support from Wisconsin Corn Promotion Board, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, and Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board.

Five importers from Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala participated in the tour. Their companies represent importers, processors and distributors with retail and foodservice customers. Also attending were Gerardo Rodriguez and Lucia Ruano, USMEF staff from the region; Tammy Vaassen, Wisconsin Beef Council; John Freitag; and Jeff Swenson with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture.

Throughout the week, the group toured three farms – Breukal Farms, Waunakee, a Holstein feedlot; Marda Angus, Lodi, a purebred Angus cow-calf farm; and Pagel's Ponderosa Dairy, a large dairy with a cheese processing plant and compressed natural gas processor on site.

They also had the opportunity to visit the JBS and American Foods Group harvest plants in Green Bay. Plant staff provided tours of the harvest floors, and discussed the products that their companies could provide to the Central American region. The guests expressed interest in a variety of beef products, but are looking for consistency and quality, while keeping in mind that it is a price sensitive market. There was interest in grain fed Holstein beef as potential to meet these needs, especially to be able to compete with their domestic grass-fed beef supply. There is a growing consumer preference for high quality beef, as well as growing purchasing power to make it more affordable.

In addition, the group had the chance to learn about U.S. meat safety and inspection, view a meat cutting demonstration of beef subprimals, and take a tour of the Meat Science and Animal Biologics building that is under construction at UW-Madison. They connected with export staff from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture who can assist with logistics of exporting products to their countries, and tour a retail meat case to see displays and merchandising efforts to help sell more beef.

This was an exciting opportunity for us to showcase the diversity of the beef industry in the state; the quality, availability and consistency of products that can be exported, and to further develop relationships with these buyers.

For a number of years, the Wisconsin Beef Council Board has worked in cooperation with the USMEF to help grow demand for beef in foreign markets – but has specifically chosen to focus on the Central American region. Those efforts have included retail and foodservice promotions in that area – Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, as well as sponsorship of the Latin American Showcase – a trade show and educational program that brings together buyers and sellers together at a single location.

In 2018, a trade team of Wisconsin beef, corn and soybean representatives travelled to El Salvador and Guatemala to view the results of the Beef Checkoff investment into those countries, and to learn about how future programs could continue to expand exports of U.S. beef to the region.

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The Wisconsin Beef Council is a producer-directed not-for-profit organization funded by the \$1.00 per head assessment on all cattle sold in the state of Wisconsin per the Federal Beef Promotion and

Research Act & Order. Half of one dollar remains in Wisconsin for local beef promotion, while the other half is forwarded to the Cattlemen's Beef Board. The purpose of the Council is to fund beef promotion, research and consumer education activities supporting Wisconsin's \$2.1 billion beef industry. The WBC operates under the guidance of its Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of representatives from cattle related organizations from around the state.