



Foreign Marketing Efforts Continue

The Wisconsin Beef Council (WBC) continues efforts to grow export markets for beef in Central America through promotion and education programs conducted by the U.S. Meat Export Federation. The Wisconsin Beef Council invests checkoff dollars with USMEF, as they have a proven track record and knowledge of specific export markets, trends and trade agreements which will help to grow beef export opportunities.

The Central America region (including the Dominican Republic) continued to be a promising market for U.S. beef in 2017 with export volume increasing 3 percent year-on-year to 19,248 mt and value remaining relatively even at \$125.4 million. Momentum to Central America has remained strong through 2018 as well, especially with larger volumes to Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Panama pushing total exports to the region 20 percent higher in volume and 16 percent higher in value through the first seven months of the year.

Ongoing education has played a pivotal role in USMEF's strategy for U.S. beef in Central America in FY2018, laying a strong foundation for future growth. USMEF has shared impactful ideas to strengthen U.S. beef demand through Hotel Restaurant Institution training programs coordinated and carried out with targeted importers and distributors in the region. Through these comprehensive efforts, USMEF has fortified U.S. beef's quality brand image and helped expand the number of cuts and concepts being promoted. This is a major driving force behind more chefs and foodservice professionals including U.S. beef on restaurant menus.

Beyond these educational and promotional endeavors to build handling capacity and to drive foodservice sales for the trade, another valuable resource for Central American importers and buyers of U.S. beef was USMEF's annual Latin American Product Showcase (LAPS), funded in part by the Wisconsin Beef Council. In its eighth year, the 2018 LAPS in the Dominican Republic was a fantastic opportunity for beef buyers and sellers to meet face to face at what has become the preeminent showcase in the region. The event drew a record turnout of 190 buyers from 20 countries across the Caribbean, Central America and South America. On the exporter side, 54 USMEF member companies participated. The showcase originated as a way of capitalizing on growing red meat demand and market access gains in Latin America by bringing buyers and sellers together at a single location. In a just a short time it has blossomed into a can't-miss event that sells out more quickly each and every year, and there is now a waiting list for exhibitors. This has happened for one simple reason – the showcase consistently delivers great results for participants.

Gerardo Rodriquez, USMEF marketing director for Mexico, Central America and the Dominican Republic, said feedback from both exporters and buyers was overwhelmingly positive, as the Latin American Product Showcase continues to gain momentum as the region's premier gathering of red meat industry professionals. "For a packer or trader who wants to meet with buyers from 20 countries across this region, it would take them three or four weeks," he said. "But here at the showcase they can do it in two days, and that's really one of the great successes of this event."

In the retail sector, USMEF has utilized Wisconsin Beef Council checkoff dollars to target market leaders, while continuing to leverage growth opportunities through partnerships with regional supermarkets and meat boutiques with potential for increased sales. USMEF's promotional success with these various retailing entities has had a direct and positive impact on U.S. beef exports to the region and resulted in increased consumer usage of U.S. high quality beef. USDA Select beef is excelling as direct competition to domestic beef produced in the region in promotions that featured a mix of traditional cuts and economical alternatives (outside/inside skirt, ribeye, porterhouse, T-bone, short ribs, top sirloin cap, tri-tip, flap and New York strip).

The continuation of USMEF's strategy of targeting large regionwide retail chains in Central America for promotion activities effectively extended U.S. beef's reach to an increased population and expanded demographic — to consumers eating it for the first time. This has had the desired effect of encouraging repeat purchases. USMEF's in-store promotions at Walmart supermarkets in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, produced excellent results: Walmart reported that U.S. beef sales through the first half of the calendar year were up 21.67 percent. In surveys conducted by USMEF, Walmart's customers rated the quality of U.S. beef cuts significantly higher than the competition.

USMEF also maintained U.S. beef's expansion into leading, locally owned supermarket chains in growth markets with WBC assistance, targeting accounts like La Torre (aka, Unisuper Guatemala, S.A.) with 76 stores across Guatemala. Since March 2018, point of sale tasting demonstrations have been held in the chain's three flagship stores simultaneously each weekend, highlighting the expanded range of U.S. cuts now carried by the chain such as coulotte, arrachera (inside skirt), ribeye and sirloin steaks. From March to August, participating stores have recorded a 76 percent year on year increase in their U.S. beef sales.

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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.