

Beef and Veal Committee – Canadian Meat Council

The COVID-19 pandemic has had widespread impacts and has seriously affected the members of the Canadian Meat Council (CMC) and our members of the Beef and Veal Committee (BVC). Members have shown amazing resiliency in a time of great uncertainty and despite all the challenges faced continue to produce while protecting the safety of their people.

The last face-to-face meeting was held in June of 2019 in Niagara Falls. Three conference calls were held between July and October and the Sub-Working Group on Traceability met several times to finalize the input on proposed changes to the Animal Identification and Traceability Regulations.

Market Access Priorities

In October 2019 CMC provided our list of Market Access Priority issues to Director General of the Market Access Secretariat (MAS) of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. In addition, CMC was consulted on a review of the Market Access Priorities ranking process where we were able to point out some of the flaws in this system that prevent smaller companies from advancing their market access priorities. As a result of this input, we understand that MAS will be changing the way they rank priorities.

Traceability

The new proposed traceability regulation is one of the key concerns of members of the BVC as it could impose considerable costs on establishments by forcing changes to the way we report traceability information.



CMC has been actively participating in a Traceability Working Group with CFIA and AAFC and are lobbying for changes in the proposed legislation. The BVC Sub-Group on Traceability was formed in October and established the parameters for a Mock Trace-Back exercise to prove to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) that establishments can already provide the information requested without having to invest in these costly reporting changes. In addition, CMC/BVC members participated in the Government-Industry Regulatory Implementation Committee (RIC) and the Industry Government Advisory Committee (IGAC). CMC/BVC has provided formal comments on the regulations followed by the Mock Trace Back Exercise results to show this information can be provided on request in very short timeframe.

Beef Grading Agency – Livestock Grade Requirements Standing Committee

The BVC discussed support for the changes that have been presented to the Livestock Grade Requirements Standing Committee (LGRSC). The change to veal carcass weight proposal was agreed to. There was discussion around the Yield Grade – Best Side Proposal by CCA and while the BVC felt there was no real benefit for packers they agreed to support on the condition CCA supported changes to dark cutters grading standards. This has been delayed by COVID-19.

BSE – OIE Negligible Risk application

CMC and BVC members have actively participated in the Government Industry Working Group on Canada's application to the OIE for Negligible Risk Status for BSE. CMC provided extensive background material to assist CFIA in their submission. Canada's submission has now been sent and the final decision will be announced in May 2021. Approval for Negligible Risk Status will be a game changer for the Canadian beef industry and will trigger opening of export markets that have been simmering for years.



SRM Removal Costs Survey

One of the costliest measures facing our members is the Specified Risk Material removal requirements which are different than our counterparts in the U.S. The difference in the amount of SRM that Canada must remove versus the U.S. makes us very uncompetitive, both in the U.S. and in international markets. CMC is working with CCA and NCFCA to encourage CFIA to harmonize the requirements with the U.S. While CFIA is linking this to our Negligible Risk Status, OIE guidelines would suggest this is not a prerequisite. CFIA has agreed to work on this policy with industry and a government/industry working group, similar to the OIE BSE Negligible Risk Submission Working Group, that has been initiated to review the process and establish a way forward.

EU Working Group

CMC has been actively working with the Market Access Secretariat and CFIA towards improving access for beef products to the EU. CMC is working with veal members to develop a protocol to allow veal to be shipped without having to participate in the costly Growth Enhancement Free program (GEP) in which beef members must comply. GEPs are not allowed to be used in veal so veal should not have to use that program. A simplified protocol is being finalized.

Other issues to be addressed will be the use of processing aids and access to more cattle. CCA is working on a program for dairy cows that never have been given GEPs and mature breeding cattle, also never given GEPs.



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Trade Agreement Updates

CUSMA was implemented on July 1 and our unaddressed issues can now be referred to bilateral committees once they are established. COVID-19 has delayed some of this work.

CMC has been working with GAC and AAFC Trade Negotiations Directorate to ensure access to the U.K. once Brexit is fully enforced. In 2021, negotiations will continue on a bilateral FTA between Canada and the U.K. for future and hopefully improved access. Our industry has requested that access be equivalent, and Canada should not allow the U.K. more access than they allow Canada.

Product of Canada

There is a renewal of the calls for COOL - Country of Origin Labelling requirements in the U.S. This time as a voluntary program and it seems to have some support from our allies. We have been advised that the inconsistency in Canadian guidelines for Product of Canada definitions is difficult for our allies to defend to the pro-COOL side in the U.S. For U.S. slaughter cattle sent to Canada to be called Product of Canada, there is a requirement for a 60-day residency, whereas Canadian slaughter cattle can be sent direct for slaughter and slaughter determines origin as per international guidelines. Canada must fix this discrepancy and a joint letter from CMC, CCA, and NCFCA was sent in June 2020 to the Minister of Agriculture and President of CFIA.