



The Beef Checkoff - 35 Years Promoting America's Premier Protein

By Scooter Pursley for the North Dakota Beef Commission

Despite anti-red meat diet trends, disease outbreaks, economic price swings, bovine spongiform encephalopathy and E. coli, and competing proteins, beef demand today is at its highest level in 33 years! Since its inception 35 years ago, the Beef Checkoff's main focus has been promoting beef and increasing consumer demand. Beef checkoff efforts invested into the industry have contributed to a more consistent, safe and higher quality product that today's consumers enjoy and are willing to buy on a regular basis.

First introduced as part of the 1985 Farm Bill, the Checkoff program is funded by producers and beef importers to help drive demand. The national \$1-per-head Checkoff is assessed on the sale of live domestic and imported cattle and imported beef and beef products. The North Dakota Beef Commission retains 50 cents of each dollar and forwards the other 50 cents to the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board, which administers the national Checkoff program, subject to USDA approval. In addition, North Dakota assesses another \$1-per-head state checkoff for additional beef promotion, research and education programs.

By keeping beef top-of-mind with consumers, the Beef Checkoff has helped to create consumer trust in beef and has pointed consumers toward restaurants, grocery stores, meat shops, and various other places to purchase and enjoy beef. The Beef Checkoff has also worked with educators, dietitians, medical personnel and influencers to ensure a wholesome, quality beef-eating experience.

"Beef Checkoff efforts have been successful by listening to

consumers and providing them with a product and eating experience they were asking for," said Sharon Kickertz-Gerbig, a beef producer from Amidon and North Dakota Beef Commission board member. "The Checkoff has invested in beef products and safety through research. Over the past 35 years we have gained consumer trust and demand. That is the real success story of the Checkoff."

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, the Beef Checkoff program encouraged consumers preparing more meals at home to be home chefs, not just a cook. Per capita, beef consumption increased in 2020.

The Beef Checkoff is now reaching consumers in high-population metropolitan areas through social media and digital advertising campaigns.

"The Checkoff is able to reach consumers where they live. We, in North Dakota, are fortunate to live where the cattle are," Kickertz-Gerbig said. "I know, with my Checkoff investment, the product I raise in North Dakota will be promoted to consumers in New York, Los Angeles, Tampa, and/or Houston. That is thanks to the Beef Checkoff."

During this special anniversary, it's important to give a tip of the hat to those who have shaped the Beef Checkoff.



Sharon Kickertz-Gerbig, NDBC Board Member

Celebrating 35 Years

The Beef Checkoff took effect in 1986 with the issuance of the Beef Promotion and Research Order. This year's 35-year Checkoff milestone was celebrated at the national Cattle Industry Convention Aug. 10-12 in Nashville, Tenn.



Here are a few Beef Checkoff milestones of the past 35 years:

1987: Launch of the award-winning "Beef: Real Food for Real People" ad campaign featuring celebrity talent Cybill Shepherd and James Garner.

1992: Launch of the award-winning "Beef. It's What's For Dinner." ad campaign.

1994: Following a beef-linked E. coli outbreak, research with packing plants and food safety experts helps develop new spray washes to reduce pathogens and prevent future contamination.

1998: SYSCO Corporation, the largest food distribution company in the U.S., rolls out 26 new beef and veal products developed by the Beef Checkoff.

Late '90s through early 2000s: Groundbreaking muscle profiling research adds overall carcass value by reinventing the previously underutilized chuck and round portions. This research was responsible for bringing the Flat Iron, Delmonico, Denver, and Sierra cut steaks to consumers.

2000: Launch of TV ads featuring Aaron Copland's "Hoe-Down" and actor Sam Elliot's voice highlight prepared beef items and increase sales by 131%.

2003: When BSE is discovered in the U.S., Checkoff partners with USDA and industry/food safety experts to reassure American consumers of protocols in place to prevent the disease from entering the food supply.

2006: Amid BSE concerns in Japan, the largest export market for U.S. beef, United States Meat Export Federation launches "We Care" to demonstrate beef's safety and quality and rebuild trust among Japanese consumers; the campaign helps return American beef sales to Japan to pre-BSE levels of \$1.5 billion annually.

2012: The *Beef in an Optimal Lean Diet* study shows lean beef as part of a heart-healthy diet is as effective in lowering heart disease risk as the DASH diet.

2018: The American Heart Association certified more than 20 *Beef. It's What's For Dinner.* recipes as heart healthy.

2020: For the first time ever, new U.S. dietary guidelines include recommendations for foods such as beef as a healthy complementary food for babies and toddlers.