

North Dakota Beef Producers Help Feed a Hungry World



By Scooter Pursley for the North Dakota Beef Commission

Beef. It's not just what's for dinner in the United States, but increasingly all around the world.

And it could very well be beef and beef variety meats that began as a calf in North Dakota that are being sent to emerging markets thanks to the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF).

"The beef producers that are part of the Beef Commission

Beef exports equated to a record \$407.22 per head in 2021, a 35 percent growth over 2020.

understand and feel very good about investing North Dakota dollars into the Meat Export Federation," North Dakota Beef Commission Chairman Mark Voll said. "We feel that it's certainly one of the top agenda items for supporting beef prices for North Dakota beef producers."

The USMEF is a trade organization that works to expand opportunities in existing and new markets for U.S. red meats, including beef, pork and lamb. Its funding comes from several sources including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, national beef, pork and lamb checkoff organizations, and many state commodity checkoff programs including the North Dakota Beef Commission, North Dakota Soybean Council and North Dakota Corn Utilization Council.

Voll explained that 96 percent of the world's population lives outside of the U.S. "That's a tremendous market opportunity for beef producers and USMEF has the expertise to make it happen. Currently, they have offices in 18 foreign countries and staff carrying out programs in over 80 different countries," he said. "I can say from personal experience, these people are passionate about selling U.S. beef. They're from that country; they speak the language and understand the cultures and promote U.S. beef."

The funding promotes partnerships that lead to the increase in red meat and variety product exports.

"The demand for beef is at a 33-year high," Voll said. "But we can't consume all the product we produce. If we didn't export, we would be devaluing the carcass."

In 2021, beef and variety meat exports jumped 15 percent from the previous year to 1.44 million metric tons. Its \$10.6 billion value was a 38 percent increase and \$2.2 billion above the previous record of 2018. This included more than 300,000 metric tons of beef variety meat, valued at a record

\$1.1 billion. These items, such as tongue, tripe and liver, are considered delicacies in some cultures.

"That comes from a cultural presence in other countries. It's somewhat country specific," Voll said. "If we were utilizing those variety meat products in the U.S., the vast majority of it would not go into human consumption."



Mark Voll,
NDBC Chairman

As the global demand for beef keeps growing, partners in USMEF offices around the world are promoting the U.S. beef industry to traders, buyers, producers and end users. As nations around the world emerge from poverty, their standards of living increase as does their consumption of proteins. Beef is at the top of that food chain.

In 2021:

- Beef and variety meat exports to China/Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea each exceeded \$2 billion. Japan's leading variety meat import was tongue; China's was tripe.
- Central America imported a record 20,991 metric tons with a value of \$137 million. Tripe is a popular beef product exported to Mexico.
- Exports to Colombia doubled in 2021 to 9,359 metric tons and \$40.7 million.

"The beef export results are truly remarkable, especially considering the COVID-related obstacles in the global food service sector and all of the supply-side and logistical challenges faced by the U.S. industry," USMEF President and CEO Dan Halstrom said.

Voll said the USMEF is excited about markets in areas of Africa that have become tourism destinations, Europe, Great Britain, and a continued cautious approach to China.

Voll said successful export marketing can have a trickle-down effect. "If exporters can make more money with U.S. beef, they can pay more for U.S. beef. When exporters pay more for the product, packers can pay more for U.S. fed cattle. The chain continues as feeder cattle and calf prices increase. Exports are a significant part driving demand for our business," he said.

