



Information Update (October 2006)

Addressing International Trade Complexities of Animal Welfare

Presented by: Future Trends in Animal Agriculture (USDA)

September 20, 2006 – Washington, DC

General Summary

- Attendance was <100, with very limited participation by agriculture industry.
- Constructive dialogue was limited; the group seemed to struggle between the extreme views of animal rights attendees and the defensiveness of industry players present. There was recognition that industry's participation was impacted by the extremist presence and the associated risks of speaking openly.
- Consensus seemed to exist regarding the need for better cooperation and collaboration between industry, government, and animal welfare groups – but the means for achieving this was not clear. The 'Canadian approach' was espoused several times as a model to look.
- Animal health and animal welfare were linked from the government perspective, noting that improved animal health impacts marketability and market access.
- Government actions and private sector requirements on animal welfare are likely to become increasingly significant for meat and livestock trade.
- Trade issues related to methods of production are likely to intensify.

Summary of Presentations

Government (United States Dept. of Agriculture-USDA, Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service-APHIS)

- Animal welfare animal health link strongly made. A further linkage was made between animal health and food safety (risks to human health) - ties to marketability.
- USDA looking to work with industry not regulate – desire for open debate and dialogue including with animal welfare advocates.
- Regardless of a country's standards, company standards may dictate production methods and behave as a trade barrier.
- U.S. Farm Bill ends in 2007, discussions underway for a new Farm Bill – need to build animal welfare into Bill as part of broader concerns on environment.

Agriculture Industry (Animal Agriculture Alliance, National Cattlemen's Beef Association)

- Producers lead the charge on animal welfare as there is an economic incentive
- Animal welfare is not a consumer driven issue, not seeing the signs that animal welfare is a problem or issue
- Need to know what industry is doing on animal welfare before demanding change
- Industry has initiated welfare guidelines and is working with international partners
- Concerns that regulations will add costs, reduce competition and be unenforceable

- Animal welfare has the potential to distort trade and become a pseudo trade barrier

Animal Advocacy Groups (World Society for the Protection of Animals, Humane Society of the United States)

- EU aims to ensure that trade liberalization does not undermine their efforts to improve animal welfare (noted that EU trade numbers are higher than the U.S.)
- Focus on developing countries – trade capacity building with links to animal welfare
- WSPA campaign – ‘Animals and People First, Why good animal welfare is important for feeding people, for trade and for the future.’
- EU aim for sustainable agriculture suggests that other countries are not focusing enough on sustainability
- 2008 – OIE conference to be held on implementation of its standards

Academia/Researchers (Pennsylvania State University, University of Maryland, Animal Welfare Institute)

- Countries don’t import/export – companies do, important distinction for markets and trade.
- U.S. cannot continue to avoid animal welfare and trade on the basis that animal welfare is not a scientific issue.
- Need compromise, good alternatives and cooperation between animal welfare groups and industry. Challenge: to animal groups - large operations will not go away, to industry - address/eliminate intensive production practices. Challenged groups to come together.
- Improvements in animal welfare should not fall on farmers alone, this is a societal concern, so may need societal intervention
- Too much focus on maximizing the productivity of individual animals. Should look at optimal production to balance animal welfare.

Susan Church, Alberta Farm Animal Care Association

Susan provided an overview of Canada’s animal welfare infrastructure and progress made to date. A copy of her presentation paper is available upon request.