

House Ag Committee Hears Testimony on Promoting USA Beef

This week, Kansas Cattlemen's Association testified before the Kansas House Agriculture Committee supporting a resolution to urge the United States Congress to enact revisions to the Federal Beef Promotion and Research Act to allow for a minimum of 50% of those assessments to be used for the promotion of USA born, raised, and processed beef.

“According to the Cattlemen’s Beef Board, 51.6% of the funds they received were used for promotion efforts. However, under the current act, checkoff funds may only be used to promote a generic product. As a mandatory program, U.S. producers bare the brunt of the cost but cannot promote their own product within the United States. Yet, beef checkoff funds can be used to promote specific cuts of beef directly benefiting retailers. Corporate entities, such as Applebee’s, are able to utilize checkoff funds to promote beef at their restaurants, directly benefiting the restaurants. As well, U.S. beef can be promoted outside of the U.S., such as the efforts in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, the European Union, Guatemala, and Mexico,” stated KCA Executive Director, Brandy Carter

Kansas Farmers Union was also represented at the testimony. Daryl Larson, KCA Board member and Kansas Farmers Union Vice President testified, “I want to address the issue of right and wrong. The current system of taxing USA cattle producers at one dollar per head every time a USA raised animal is sold without allowing us to use that money to promote our own USA cattle and or beef within our own country is WRONG. Now there are some people that want to increase the amount collected to two dollars per head and that is also WRONG at least until we can correct the problems with the current system.”

Wanda Kinney, representing DWK farms made a compelling comparison as to how checkoff funds are used to promote generic meat, “Coca Cola doesn't support and promote Pepsi, Syngenta doesn't pay to support Monsanto products, and Boeing doesn't pay to support and promote the Air Bus of France! If foreign importers of beef want to support their products, let them pay their check off dollars to do so.”

A total of 9 producer testimonies were given in support of the resolution.

However, Kansas Livestock Association and a KLA/former Cattlemen’s Beef Board member testified in opposition HCR 5034.

“A Congressional mandate that at least 50% of the checkoff dollars must be used for promotion takes flexibility away from the program. Beef producers may determine additional funds should be shifted to conduct additional food safety research or to manage a crisis such as BSE. This resolution would limit beef producers’ ability to adapt to changing industry needs.”

After the hearing, visiting with producers, Carter remarked, "This resolution urges congress to ALLOW not mandate that the Cattlemen's Beef Board to promote USA beef. This is an opportunity for U.S. producers to see their U.S. products promoted on the shelves of grocery stores."

No action was taken by the committee and the Kansas Cattlemen's Association will continue to urge the House Agriculture Committee to pass HCR 5034.