

Quote: 191582

Mr. Chad MacPherson

General Manager

Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association

ssga@sasktel.net

Dear Mr. MacPherson:

Thank you for your email and the attached resolutions made by the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association at its recent annual general meeting. I appreciate receiving a copy of these resolutions.

Most of the resolutions are specific to Saskatchewan's Ministry of Agriculture; however, I am pleased to provide the following responses for those resolutions that are applicable to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC):

Resolution #1

The effective management of bacterial contamination is a constant challenge for the North American food industry. Meat processing interventions, such as high-pressure pasteurization and organic acid rinses, seek to reduce microbial contamination. Irradiation of beef, if approved, would provide industry with another option within the processing chain.

Irradiation was positively assessed as a method for destroying pathogenic bacteria (but not necessarily recommended) in the 2009 *Report of the Independent Investigator into the 2008*

Listeriosis Outbreak. However, the Report recognized that irradiation would likely not be accepted by consumers “without a major consumer education program.” Consumers play a major role in the market acceptance of irradiated food products and must be willing to pay a higher cost for these products. The recently released *Independent Review of XL Foods Inc. Beef Recall 2012* recommended that the beef industry submit a proposal to Health Canada to approve irradiation as an effective food safety intervention. It was recommended that Health Canada give the application prompt consideration.

The Canadian Cattlemen’s Association submitted an application to Health Canada in May 2013 for approval of the irradiation process for beef products (trim and ground beef) and carcasses. Health Canada is reviewing the submission. If approved, irradiation would be one of the many interventions used in the production of meat products.

Resolution #2

The vast majority of land on which federal community pastures operate is provincially leased or reversionary to the provinces of Manitoba or Saskatchewan when pasture operations cease. This land will be returned to the provinces. The remaining federally owned land and assets will be disposed of through the Public Works and Government Services Canada disposal process.

Resolution #5

Many stakeholders throughout the agriculture, food, and seafood supply chain have encountered challenges in accessing an adequate supply of Canadian workers to match their business needs, and this certainly holds true for many in Saskatchewan. A supply of skilled and reliable workers is essential for the sector to remain competitive, and I recognize the important role that the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) is playing in helping many agricultural operations manage their labour requirements.

AAFC has created the Labour Task Force to review a number of labour issues affecting the Canadian agriculture, agri-food, and seafood industries. The Task Force includes industry representatives from the value chain roundtables of 11 sectors and representatives from government departments such as AAFC, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

One of the Task Force's main priorities is to work with CIC and HRSDC to address industry concerns about the TFWP. The Task Force's recent work includes a sectoral analysis of the TFWP, and through ongoing discussions with key departments and program administrators, the development of potential solutions to alleviate some of the challenges the sector faces with this program.

Resolution #7

The federal government is continually working with our provincial partners to make improvements to the insurance coverage available for forage, and an industry-government Forage Task Team recently explored a range of options. One of the areas the Task Team considered was parameters for a forage insurance model based on feed need that would allow plans to be tailored to the number of animals and subsequent feed requirements on individual farms. While it is the provincial government's decision what forage plans it wishes to offer, AAFC is supportive of provinces proposing new ideas or alternative models such as the feed-need idea put forth by the Task Team.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate your organization as you celebrate your centenary, a remarkable milestone and a reflection of your group's ongoing role as a strong advocate for the cattle industry in Saskatchewan.

Again, thank you for writing to me on this matter.

Sincerely,

Gerry Ritz, PC, MP