

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE LAMB INDUSTRY ROADMAP

Nearly three months have passed since the roll out of the Lamb Industry Roadmap presented at the Annual Sheep Convention in Charleston, SC.

Some people in the industry have started to ask, “Is there anything happening with the Roadmap?” The answer is, “Absolutely yes.”

Appointment of Roadmap Teams

For starters, all of the five Roadmap Team members have been appointed. This process took a bit longer than anticipated because we had multiple organizations making appointments and offering recommendations. We tried to balance representation on all five teams which is, in itself, a complex process.

But we are delighted to report that we have 50 participants from all sectors of the sheep industry serving on 5 Roadmap Committees.

Initial Activity of Roadmap Teams

One of the challenges facing each team is that we are trying to operate primarily with telephone conference calls with only occasional in-person meetings. The teams have all had at least one conference call meeting and have begun the process of getting to know one another. Plus they are engaged in discussion on what the goals of their team should be for 2014 and 2015.

Ideas Currently Being Discussed

Since the teams are still developing consensus about future goals, we cannot give a definitive statement about what you can expect in 2014 or 2015. However, we can provide a brief description of some of the ideas under consideration that are being discussed and debated by the five teams.

Current Ideas Receiving Attention

- Identification of a short list of the most important characteristics that consumers look for when purchasing lamb meat that should be used by packers in value-based pricing programs – recognizing that not all consumers want the same things:
 - Some want mild flavor and some prefer stronger flavor.
 - Some want grass fed and some prefer grain fed.
 - And the list goes on.
- Ways to promote further adoption of electronic grading.

- Final report from Colorado State has been submitted to ALB: “Industry Implications and Economics of Implementation of Lamb Instrument Grading.”
- Exploration of ways the Roadmap can support the breed associations and ways the breed associations can support the goals and objectives of the Roadmap.
- A survey of research reports done to date that identify the various factors that influence lamb taste and other important characteristics.
- Ways to test for those characteristics in the meat in a manner that:
 - Is effective in predicting the consumers’ eating experience.
 - Can be accomplished at current line speeds in packing plants.
 - Is easy to understand and could be used to differentiate lamb to consumers in the marketplace.
- Ways to provide greater support to one of the industry segments that is growing the fastest – direct marketers.
- Ways to educate food retailers about the unique needs of ethnic populations – especially the second and third generations as they purchase fewer live animals and begin to use the traditional food retailing channel.
- Exploring how to define and implement an “American Brand” for lamb that could be used only for lamb meat that meets high specifications, e.g., somewhat similar to Certified Angus Beef (but not specific to one sheep breed).
- Developing a strategy for future sheep research and producer education in light of sharp declines in federal and state funding for these critical activities.
- Identification of the most effective ways to improve producer productivity based on research results that are currently known.
- Development of ways to promote those practices that will improve productivity in a widespread way to large numbers of producers.
- Ways that the lamb industry can make improvements in its long-term collaboration.
- Exploration of ways the industry might improve its reporting on inventory levels – including both lambs in feedlots and meat inventories in freezers.

These are some of the topics currently receiving attention. During the next two months, these topics will assume greater focus with each team developing its own list of desired accomplishments for 2014 and 2015.

We will issue quarterly Progress Reports and other updates on our activities to the industry throughout the year as specific plans become crystalized. We will also give a State of the Lamb Industry Report at Sheep Convention in Reno, NV in January.

Stay tuned. Change is coming.

Send your ideas via email to members of any of the Roadmap Teams. A list of the members of each team and their email addresses is attached below.

ROADMAP TEAM MEMBERS AND THEIR EMAIL ADDRESSES

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