

*Addressing consumer demands for socially responsible pork production***Pork Checkoff Seeks Input from Pork Producers in Crafting New Strategic Plan**

If you are a pork producer, what issues do you think will have the greatest impact on your future over the next few years? And how should the National Pork Board use your Checkoff investment to impact those issues?

The National Pork Board is asking for your participation in a nationwide survey to help them respond to those questions. The survey, which takes only a few minutes to complete, is part of an effort by the board to get broad-based producer input as the board creates a new strategic plan for the organization.

The overall objective of the planning process is to find new solutions to the economic, social, and scientific challenges facing the pork industry, said National Pork Board Chief Executive Chris Novak. The survey, together with three regional producers meetings, is designed to ensure the plan is focused on critical day-to-day needs of pork producers. The regional meetings were held in Omaha, Indianapolis and Clinton, North Carolina.

During 2010, the National Pork Board will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the creation of the national Pork Checkoff. The strategic planning process is motivated in part by a desire to look at the role of the Pork Checkoff with fresh eyes, just as the pioneering producers who created the Checkoff did 25 years ago, Novak said.

The big questions, he added, are, "What are the industry's needs, concerns and priorities now, and what will they be five years from now and even 25 years from now? And what should the National Pork Board be doing to address these needs through the Pork Checkoff?"

The survey questions allow producers to identify and prioritize the issues they believe are important. There is room at the end of the survey for producers to add specific comments.

Deadline for completing the survey is Friday, August 21. To complete the survey visit pork.org and under the spotlight section click on the link titled Pork Checkoff Seeks Input from Pork Producers in Crafting New Strategic Plan.

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*Adding measurable value to U.S. Pork***Type A H1N1 Consumer Confidence**

The Type A H1N1 outbreak, still commonly referred as the Swine Flu by some media, quickly undermined consumer confidence in pork safety, disrupted domestic pork sales and spawned new international trade restrictions on pork and pork productions.

The National Pork Board's first objective was to "reassure U.S. consumers and international trading partners that pork is safe." The Pork Checkoff's response with a vigorous "pork is safe" message was communicated through media statements, press releases, the microsite www.factsaboutpork.com, national advertising and engaged a number of spokespeople. Due to the reinforcement of these messages by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and other resources, the "pork is safe" message received good pull-through from mainstream media coverage and online conversations.

Despite many challenges, consumer confidence research conducted by the Checkoff indicated that general consumer confidence in the safety of pork remained steady near 83 percent throughout the first two weeks of the outbreak. Further, there was a substantially growing realization among those consumers who were aware of recent news coverage that there is no connection between the flu and pork products – increasing 8 points to 71 percent in a week.

"What this indicates is that the communications efforts of the National Pork Board and other entities helped improve the perception of the safety of pork products despite the difficult situation," said Colleen Parr, senior vice president and partner at Fleishman Hillard. Fleishman Hillard is a national public relations firm that advises the Pork Checkoff on crisis communication.

Parr also noted while there is no baseline consumer confidence data available, it's helpful to look at other crisis situations for perspective. During the height of avian influenza concerns in 2007, 40 percent of consumers surveyed said they would not eat chicken if avian influenza was detected in the U.S. chicken population, and 20 percent indicated they would never eat chicken again. Of those who would go back

to eating chicken, they stated it would take more than four months before they would resume chicken consumption. During the late 2003 announcement of BSE in the United States, 75 percent of consumers were confident in the U.S. beef supply. Finally, more than six weeks after the spinach recall in late 2006, more than half of spinach eaters still had not returned to eating the product. All findings come from Rutgers' Food Policy Institute.

The Checkoff is working with the National Pork Producers Council, the U.S. Meat Export Federation and the American Association of Swine Veterinarians to prepare for the fall influenza season. A lot of work is going on behind the scenes both on the operational side and the communication side.

A few examples of the behind scenes work includes: coordinating webinars for key audiences to understand that if pigs get Type A H1N1, pork is still safe; reaching out to the influential media with a letter from National Pork Board president Tim Bierman to use the term Novel H1N1 instead of swine flu; and continuing to work with USDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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PORK CHECKOFF IN THE **SPOTLIGHT**

Tim Bierman Selected to Lead National Pork Board

Tim Bierman, a farmer from Larrabee, Iowa, has been elected by his fellow board members as president of the National Pork Board. Dr. Gene Nemecek, a veterinarian with Tyson Foods in Springdale, Ark., has been elected vice president. Both begin immediately to serve one-year terms.

Bierman, who had been the board's vice president, has a long history of service to the U.S. pork industry through his work on the Iowa Pork Producers Association board and as a two-term member of the National Pork Board. He serves on the National Pork Board's Trade Committee and has become knowledgeable about the international trade issues facing the U.S. pork industry. He also has served on the national organization's animal well-being, domestic marketing and budget committees and has held a number of other state and national pork industry positions.

"Pork producers know this is one of the most challenging periods our industry has ever faced," Bierman said. "It began almost two years ago with the sudden and dramatic increase in our input costs because of higher corn and soybean prices. And now with the H1N1 flu, we're experiencing lower prices for our pigs because of the way some countries and some consumers have misconstrued the role of swine in the global pandemic.

"At the same time," Bierman said, "I am optimistic because I believe the National Pork Board, through the Pork Checkoff, is well positioned to help producers work through the current challenges. We continue to assure consumers and our trading partners that pork is safe to eat. We continue to market pork products aggressively at home and abroad. And we continue to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with the National Pork Producers Council, with swine veterinarians and others to assure that producers have the information they need in these challenging times.

"I'm also optimistic about the progress our industry is making through the We Care initiative to demonstrate to all of our customers that U.S. pork producers are ethically and scientifically committed to delivering high-quality pork products that are safe, nutritious and affordable. I will continue to encourage producers to become certified in our industry's Pork Quality Assurance Plus® program and to have their sites assessed so we can continuously improve our animal handling practices."

Bierman and Nemecek were elected during the board's summer meeting. The board focused primarily on budgets, both the 2009 budget and the planning for 2010. Because of unanticipated expenses related to the industry's response to the H1N1 flu outbreak this spring, the board accepted its staff's recommendation to trim approximately \$4.2 million from the budget year that ends Dec. 31. The board noted, though, that their decision will not affect a new proposal to spend an additional \$1 million on pork promotion this fall.

The board also set a \$46.8 million target for the 2010 budget year beginning Jan. 1. That target compares to a \$58.5 million budget for 2009. Because of lower hog prices, Checkoff revenues are expected to be lower in 2010.

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