



2020 Virtual Stakeholders Summit Highlights Report

Animal Agriculture Alliance | May 7-8, 2020

“Primed & Prepared”



Preconference Webinars: April 30 – May 6, 2020

Where's the Beef with Sustainability and Plant-Based Alternatives?

Speaker:

- Sara Place, PhD, Chief Sustainability Officer, Elanco Animal Health

Quotes:

- *“Sustainability is balancing three different main domains – environment, economic, and social issues.” – Place*
- *“Livestock are acting as upcyclers.” – Place*
- *“Any improvements made in crop production translate to improvements in livestock production.” – Place*
- *“One acre of land can produce the bun and the burger – it's not an either/or.” – Place*
- *“You can't eat your way out of climate change.” – Place*

Key Messages:

- Livestock bring value to sustainable food systems by upcycling plant proteins into higher quality proteins.
 - 89% of cattle diets are inedible to humans.
- Diet changes will not have a substantial impact on climate change.
 - If every American went vegan and US livestock disappeared, greenhouse gas emissions would be only be reduced 2.6%.
- Crop and livestock systems need to work together for an efficient food system.

Connecting Around Sustainability: Where is Animal Ag Headed?

Speakers:

- Claire Masker-King, Director of Sustainability Communications, National Pork Board
- Karen Scanlon, Vice President, Sustainability Partnerships, Dairy Management Inc.
- Ashley McDonald, Senior Director of Sustainability, National Cattlemen's Beef Association
- Ryan Bennett, Executive Director, U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Poultry and Eggs
- Eric Mittenthal, Vice President of Sustainability, North American Meat Institute

Quotes:

- *“We want to get better, and we want to talk about it.” – Masker-King*
- *“As an industry, we've done a great job at doing the right thing and trying to tell our story. I don't think we've put a lot of focus on proving it. We have to prove it and be transparent about how we're proving it.” – Mittenthal*

Key Messages:

- Every sector of animal agriculture has made strides in sustainability and continues to develop new sustainability goals.
- Connecting with stakeholders is key to expanding sustainability programs and bridging gaps.
 - Most segments of the food supply chain realize they have a part to play and an opinion to share in sustainability discussions.
 - Animal agriculture needs to bridge gaps with those outside of the industry as well – there are more things in common between stakeholders of all sectors than not.
- Animal agriculture needs to find ways to improve transparency and share improvements that have been made.
- The viability of agriculture must be kept in mind when considering possible sustainability improvements.

Using New Tools: Measuring Consumer Opinions with Biometrics

Speakers:

- Tyler Davis, PhD, Assistant Professor, Psychological Sciences, Texas Tech University
- Rhonda Miller, PhD, Professor, Meat Science, Texas A&M University
- Jessica Meisinger, PhD, North American Sustainability Lead, Merck Animal Health

Quotes:

- *“Consumer perceptions are highly influenced by social media and infographics.” – Davis*
- *“Functional neuroimaging allows us to predict consumer response to food technology information.” – Davis*
- *“Infographics are known for the actual graphics, but people do still spend time reading text on infographics.” – Miller*
- *“How people answer in surveys and what they buy aren’t necessarily the same. When you look at brain and eye movement information, you can definitively tell what consumers feel.” – Meisinger*

Key Messages:

- Consumer behavior is influenced by marketing factors, psychological factors and sensory factors.
- Antibiotics and hormones were rated as most risky; animal welfare, sustainability, and GMOs rated more positively.
 - Items perceived as “riskier” have more change potential because they are being thought about more.
 - We need to engage with consumers more to change perceptions and buying decisions.

Science as a Tool to Address Animal Welfare

Speakers:

- Tim Kurt, DVM, PhD, Scientific Program Director, Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research
- Candace Croney, PhD, Director, Center for Animal Welfare Science, Purdue University
- Karen Christensen, PhD, Senior Director, Animal Welfare, Tyson Foods

Quotes:

- *“There is a balance needed between ensuring science is upheld and ensuring that consumer perceptions and values are also attended to, especially in regards to animal agriculture.” – Croney*
- *“Even if animal welfare isn’t the top priority for certain stakeholders, it must always remain a priority for people in animal agriculture.” – Croney*
- *“When you improve animal welfare, you improve animal production and productivity which is a win for everyone.” – Kurt*

Key Messages:

- Consumers want good, safe and affordable food that doesn’t have a negative effect on animals.
 - Consumers have a perception of what matters to them and what they believe is right regardless of knowledge of agricultural practices.
- New technologies are being used to better understand animal behavior, help predict welfare outcomes and make quick adjustments.
- Communication is vital to helping consumers understand what is being done to improve.

Building a Culture of Care

Moderator:

- Michelle Calvo-Lorenzo, PhD, Chief Animal Welfare Officer, Elanco Animal Health

Panelists:

- Robert Hagevoort, PhD, Associate Professor and Extension Dairy Specialist, New Mexico State University
- Josh Linde, Pig Farmer and General Manager, Heartland Region, The Maschhoffs
- Max Irsik, Manager, Animal Agriculture, KCoe Isom

Quotes:

- *“There’s an animal component to building a culture of care and there’s a human component. It is easy to change a person’s knowledge or skills but harder to change a person’s character.” – Hagevoort*
- *“Taking care of our people trickles down to optimizing animal welfare.” – Linde*
- *“We need to focus on coaching attitude about working with animals including motivation, commitment, honesty, etc.” – Hagevoort*

Key Messages:

- Empowering and educating employees helps to build positive human/animal interactions.
 - The industry has seen a shift in the cultural backgrounds and education level of farm workers as farms begin to need and rely on non-family members.
 - Workers who understand animal behavior are more confident and work safer than those who don't.
- Animal welfare doesn't exist in a vacuum – it requires mindful human/animal interactions.
- A 'culture of care' should be maintained in every decision regarding employees, animals and the land.

Summit Day 1: May 7, 2020

Natural: How Faith in Nature's Goodness Leads to Harmful Fads, Unjust Laws and Flawed Science

Speaker:

- Alan Levinovitz, PhD, Associate Professor of Religion, James Madison University

Quotes:

- *"People want to know where their food comes from and "naturalness" tells them a story they can understand."* – Levinovitz
- *"People have this idea of nature as perfect, original and intentional – thus "natural food" shoppers are trying, in a way, to engage in a religious practice. They want to be a part of an original, "natural" system they believe is inherently good."* – Levinovitz

Key Messages:

- Some consumers view labels, such as "natural" and "organic" as validation of the purity of food.
- The idea of divinity and naturalness persists regardless of a clear connection to God.
 - Nature is perfect, so there is an inherent belief that if something is natural it is good.
 - The animal agriculture industry supports the "natural" rhetoric when comparing "clean meat" to traditional meat.
- To change the conversation, the industry should focus on how natural and unnatural can coexist.

Conversations that Cultivate Trust: Staking Your Claim on the Plant-based Plate

Moderator:

- Tom Super, Senior Vice President of Communications, National Chicken Council

Panelists:

- Nicole Rodriguez, RDN, Enjoy Food Enjoy Life
- Cara Harbstreet, RD, Street Smart Nutrition
- Allison Webster, PhD, RD, Director, Research and Nutrition Communications, International Food Information Council

Quotes:

- *“Agriculturally, you work together, and on the plate, you work together too.” – Rodriguez*
- *“We’re looking to eat more fruits and vegetables, and we’re enjoying those meat products.” – Rodriguez*
- *“Food is more emotional and personal than ever.” – Harbstreet*

Key Messages

- Meals can be plant-based and still contain animal protein and dairy products.
 - Trust needs to be built on the plate and balance should be promoted.
 - There is a natural partnership between plant-based foods and meat products.
- Taste, price, nutrition, convenience and sustainability are purchase drivers.
 - Cost is a big factor and more affluent families are the ones with the ability to try new food products.
- Everyone defines food-related buzz words differently, so be clear about what those words mean to you.
 - Personal beliefs about food are not black and white.
 - Know and share your values.

Building Links Along the Food Chain: Enhancing the Sustainability Conversation

Moderator:

- Constance Cullman, President and CEO, American Feed Industry Association

Panelists:

- Molly McAdams, PhD, retail advisor, Texas cattle rancher, former vice president of HEB
- Lee Bob Harper, DVM, Associate Director, Technical Services, Zoetis
- Marianne Smith Edge, RDN, The AgriNutrition Edge

Quotes:

- *“There’s a lack of clarity in what sustainability is.” – Smith Edge*
- *“There is no simpler definition of sustainability than doing more with less.” – Harper*
- *“If sustainable diets that are nutrient rich, affordable, culturally appropriate and respectful of the environment are the goal, collaboration and consensus building are essential.” – Smith Edge*
- *“Let’s tell our story because we have a great one to tell.” – Harper*
- *“Put yourself out there. It’s your way of life, it’s your living, it’s your education.” – McAdams*
- *“We’re not trying to kick the door down – the door’s open.” – McAdams*

Key Messages

- Meat matters to retailers because it matters to consumers.
 - 43% overall store sales come from fresh categories
 - Beef burgers still the top sandwich ordered in restaurants
- The consumer has been the beneficiary of affordable food, spending less than 10% of disposable income on food purchases.
- Consumers are open and willing to talk about food.
 - Farmers rely on people along the food chain to share their story; we need to encourage farmers to share their stories on their own.
- Human population growth has had a much larger impact on environmental sustainability than animal agriculture.
- There is no single solution to address sustainability without consequences.

Can You Hear Me Now? How Agriculture Can Communicate on Animal Welfare

Speaker:

- Candace Croney, PhD, Director, Center for Animal Welfare Science, Purdue University

Quotes:

- *“When we are talking – are we talking about food or are we talking about animals?” – Croney*
- *“People don’t care how much you know about the topic until they know how much you care.” – Croney*
- *“Start by sharing your vision and your values.” – Croney*
- *“You can’t feed your pet like family if someone isn’t farming for them.” – Croney*

Key Messages

- When communicating about animal agriculture, you need to be aware of misinformation, where people get information, personal ethics and social dynamics.
- We often share we are caring for (husbandry) animals rather than caring about (ethics) animals.
 - We need to show why it matters how we treat animals, outside of production practices and benefits.
 - Consumers have trouble grasping that someone can love animals if they raise them to be killed.
- Connections with consumers should start with shared values that conversations about welfare can be built off of.

Summit Day 2: May 8, 2020

Securing the Future of Animal Ag: Understanding Activist Threats

Speaker:

- Kay Johnson Smith, President and CEO, Animal Agriculture Alliance

Quotes:

- *“People are hungry to know where their food comes from.” – Johnson Smith*
- *“There are risks in engaging in tough conversations, but it is worth it, and we have to be part of the conversation.” – Johnson Smith*

Key Messages

- Activists are organizing mass protests on farms, stealing animals in the dead of the night and in broad daylight.
 - Efforts are being livestreamed and posted on social media.
- There are also reports of “stalking” as activists follow truck drivers hauling animals.
 - Activists look for opportunities to stop the truck drivers, asking to give food or water to the animal or to hold vigils.

Getting Prepared: Farm Security Advice

Speaker:

- Jim Rovers, Senior Vice President, AFIMAC
- Brianna Schroeder, Attorney, Janzen Agricultural Law
- John Sancenito, President, INA, Inc.

Quotes:

- *“Odds are, if you’re being attacked, you’re not the only one.”*
- *“Social media allows [activists] to seem like their lies are more valid than they are.”*

Key Messages

- Farm security practices should be implemented in the hiring process.
 - Farms should have an actual application, call references, and utilize legal fine print to protect your operation from bad actors.
- Standardized, well documented training related to animal training should be readily available.
 - Training should be a frequent process, not a one-time thing.
- Everyone on the farm should be aware of visitor protocols.
- Make it harder for activists to target you by staying informed on activist tactics, working with trusted employees and documenting everything.

Farmers on the Front Lines: Are They Prepared?

Speakers:

- Marissa Hake, DVM, Veterinarian, aka Calf Vet
- Ryan Valk, California poultry and almond grower, aka California Farmer
- Tara Vander Dussen, New Mexico dairy farmer, aka New Mexico Milkmaid
- Michelle Miller, Iowa sheep, cattle, and crop farmer, aka The Farm Babe

Quotes:

- *“Our social license with consumers has to be earned and maintained. We don’t want to erode consumer trust, and we want to find common ground.” – Hake*
- *“Sometimes, agriculture can be its own worst enemy. We have to stand united! If we’re going to have a voice for agriculture, we all have to be united and work collectively.” – Valk*
- *“We don’t have to all agree, but we need to stand united. We can disagree but still support each other. It makes us stronger to work together – one farmer can be a valuable resource to another, and that’s powerful.” – Vander Dussen*

Key Messages

- Consumers want to engage with farmers, and social media can help reach the moveable middle to build common ground.
- Fighting between sectors of agriculture can be worse than activist attacks.
 - Not everyone needs to be advocating on social media.
 - Many farmers are not aware of the implications of what they say.
- There are ways to market a product without bashing another.
 - If your product is so good and you believe in it, you should only have to talk about your brand.

The Bridge to Trust: Understanding Confused Consumers

Speaker:

- Steve Lerch, Founder and President of Story Arc Consulting

Quotes:

- *“Trust is almost as important to consumers as quality and value.” – Lerch*
- *“You can’t be all things to all people.” – Lerch*
- *“If Tom Hanks can be someone’s villain, then anyone can be someone’s villain.” – Lerch*
- *“No group is so conservative or serious that you can’t experiment with ways to share your message.” – Lerch*

Key Messages

- Fear is a powerful motivator, and that’s why people use it to market products.
- Understanding what consumers are thinking is key to building relationships.
 - Google Trends is a great resource for learning more.

- The consumers in the middle are the ones that need to be reached, but they also tend to be the people who are paying the least attention.
- Lead with a “Beyoncé story” – be entertaining to grab someone’s attention instead of leading with hard facts.