



## 2021 Virtual Stakeholders Summit Highlights Report

Animal Agriculture Alliance | May 5-6, 2021

“Obstacles to Opportunities”



## Preconference Webinar Series: April 28 – May 4, 2021

### “Animal Agriculture and Alternative Meats: Learning from Past Science Communication Failures”

#### Speaker:

- Alison Van Eenennaam, PhD, Animal Biotechnology and Genomics Extension Specialist, University of California, Davis

#### Quotes:

- “Pink slime: a horrible sounding name for a process to add smaller pieces of lean meat to ground beef to produce a leaner product, which reduces food waste by utilizing as much meat from an animal as possible.” – *Van Eenennaam*
- “The story of the rebranding of [pink slime] from lean, finely textured beef to pink slime reveals just how much these labels matter and how futile it proves to be to try to counteract FUD: fear, uncertainty and doubt with FED: facts, explanations and data.” – *Van Eenennaam*
- “The demonization of a breeding method, genetically modified organisms or GMOs, has effectively blocked global farmer access to useful genetic innovations.” – *Van Eenennaam*
- “My nutrition classes taught me that animal-source foods supply high-quality protein and bioavailable Vitamin A, Vitamin D3, B12, iron, iodine, zinc, calcium, folic acid and key essential fatty acids that can be locally difficult to attain in adequate quantities from plant-source foods alone.” – *Van Eenennaam*
- “It's really agricultural research that's fueled an avalanche of innovation, which resulted in this dramatic reduction of life-threatening famine.” – *Van Eenennaam*
- “Conventional meat shares the very same goal as alternative and cell-based proteins to reduce the environmental impact of food products.” – *Van Eenennaam*
- “If we actually totally forgot about health and said we want to eat the lowest possible environmental impact diet, we would get pushed down to the right side of this graph: added sugars, solid fats and oils.” – *Van Eenennaam*
- “Addressing the future protein demand will require efforts to increase the environmental efficiency of food production.” – *Van Eenennaam*
- “Do we really want to use the same tactics that others have used to hinder the perspective of agriculture?” – *Van Eenennaam discussing the use of disparaging marketing tactics*

#### Key Messages:

- There is a need to feed more people with less environmental impact to meet the demands of a growing population. Demonizing innovation in food production threatens food security.
- 81% of scientists agree it is safe to eat genetically modified foods but only 37% of U.S. adults believe this, leaving a 51% agreement gap.
- Patrick Brown, CEO and founder of Impossible Foods, has an ambitious goal to end animal agriculture by 2035, however, animal agriculture is projected to produce 1.7 billion metric tons of product by then.
- Livestock serve much more than social and economic purposes. There are a number of unintended consequences that would occur if they were removed from the food supply.
- The sustainability of the food system is more complex than focusing on a single issue or factor.

- Many celebrities and companies are investing in alternative proteins including Bill Gates, Leonardo DiCaprio, Cargill, Tyson and Jimmy Dean.
- The developing world is contributing about 75% of greenhouse gas emissions for livestock compared to developed nations.
- The FAO estimates that better management practices alone could reduce emissions (methane especially) by around 30%.
- We need to be positive to all types of agriculture and food production. Attacking certain methods only incites fear and uncertainty in the food supply, which hurts our ability to use innovation and technology in food production that allow us to produce more while using fewer resources.
- Food tech is often accepted in alternative proteins but not traditional meat because of how the proteins are framed and promoted.

## “Embracing Change: Virtual Stakeholder and Influencer Engagement”

### Speakers:

- Emma Andrew-Swarthout, Director of Dairy Industry Image, American Dairy Association North East
- Terri Moore, Vice President of Communications, American Farm Bureau Federation
- Mike Ioakimedes, Executive Director and CEO, Solano County Fair Association

### Quotes:

- “In-person is more personal... attending virtually is an option but it isn't necessarily the preference.” – *Ioakimedes*
- “You really have to assess that based on the event, the audience and the demographic and what your goal outcome for your attendees is.” – *Andrew-Swarthout on deciding between hosting an in-person or virtual event*
- “If you're all gathered around the same activity... they can still have that same connectedness.” – *Andrew Swarthout*
- “You want people to be able to enjoy the event and connect, but you don't want it to give activists an opportunity to hijack or disrupt the event for others.” - *Ioakimedes*
- “People love to be engaged. They don't want to sit and watch.” – *Moore*
- “It's really easy to get locked down into the details and get so far into the weeds, so to speak, that we forget that most people don't notice 90% of what we're concerned with as long as you put your heart into it.” – *Ioakimedes*
- “Don't forget why you're doing it.” - *Swarthout*

### Key Messages:

- Change is inevitable and something that we all need to adapt with. It also gives us new opportunities to try things differently.
- Virtual elements allow us to reach a much wider audience than in-person opportunities, oftentimes at a lower cost.
- Audience engagement is key for virtual programs, especially as “Zoom fatigue” sets in.
- Hybrid events will most likely be the future as we navigate this “new normal.”

- In a poll, 59% of Virtual Summit attendees said they plan to incorporate virtual components into in-person events in the future.
- They should be structured in a way that virtual elements offer supplemental and enhanced learning but do not take away the in-person interaction and networking.
- Identify weak points in virtual or hybrid events that activists could take advantage of and prepare a plan to mitigate the effects if it does happen.
- Internet connectivity remains an issue for those in rural areas, making it more difficult for them to take advantage of virtual opportunities.

## “A Changing View from Washington & Statehouses Around the Country: Challenges and Opportunities in a New Administration”

### Moderator:

- Nick Giordano, Vice President and Counsel, Global Government Affairs, National Pork Producers Council

### Speakers:

- Christian Richter, Principal, The Policy Group
- Elizabeth Rumley, Senior Staff Attorney, National Agricultural Law Center

### Quotes:

- “Animal ag has a good story to tell and is telling that story early enough to make a difference in environmental matters.” – *Richter*
- “In the Obama administration, there were five staffers that had the word “climate” in their title, and the Biden administration, there are nine staffers with the term “climate” in their title.” – *Richter*
- “It’s helpful to see that agriculture overall is being acknowledged, and there is time being spent on issues that matter to the ag community overall.” – *Richter*
- “I think that the federal government is going to have to address [state animal confinement laws] just because we have such a diverse animal agriculture field and it sells to so many places that it’s going to need some sort of a federal response and federal regulation as to what can be sold where.” – *Rumley*
- “I think if you are interested in [confinement statutes] from sort of a granular level, you need to pay attention to what’s happening in other states because it’s a lot easier to take it to another state [once it has been passed somewhere else].” – *Rumley*

### Key Messages:

- Federal issues of particular importance to animal agriculture include labor, food system sustainability and trade.
- Activist-developed ballot initiatives at the state level are a growing issue for animal agriculture as the initiatives lack a foundation in science and prey on public emotion.
- Climate discussions will be huge under the Biden Administration and USDA is expected to receive and put more funding toward climate initiatives. Farmer-led, voluntary environmental solutions are going to be paramount in climate legislation.

- Key issues of importance to animal agriculture at the state level include farm animal housing, processing, right-to-farm and ballot proposals.
- Some state level measures, including CA Prop 12, are having impacts on other states as they provide barriers to what can be bought and sold in the state. Courts are discussing the legality of the measure because of its overreach.
- Ballot initiatives mandating practices in animal agriculture are frequently used as an incremental first-step to proposing stricter legislation or initiatives that could more easily move to other states.
- The first supportive court decision or passage of legislation on a certain issue makes it easier to receive the same response in future cases or passage in other states.

## “Expanding the Base: What Companies and Organizations are Doing to Promote and Protect Animal Ag”

### Moderator:

- Jane Hillstrom, Vice President, Reputation Management, Filament

### Speakers:

- Sharyl Sauer, Global Business Platforms Communications Leader, Corteva Agriscience
- Stewart Leeth, Chief Sustainability Officer, Smithfield Foods
- Emily Johannes, Senior Manager, Sustainable Sourcing, Nestle
- Megan Hayes, President, Filament

### Quotes:

- "Sharing agriculture stories involves understanding the audience, then determining how to use emotion to connect with that audience, and then telling compelling stories to reach that audience." – *Hillstrom*
- “We all get up every day and think about in our companies how to put safe, affordable food on the table, how to treat and care for animals on farms, how to further minimize environmental impacts and how to keep our employees safe.” – *Leeth*
- “We believe that agriculture is the solution and not the problem in our road to net zero [emissions].” – *Johannes*
- “Animal activists are reading the same publications that we’re using to educate and communicate to our own industries.” – *Hayes*
- “Every company is advocating for the agricultural industry in their day-to-day materials, whether or not they realize it or not.” – *Hayes*
- "If we're using words that feel nicer to us but they're not the words that are being Googled, then it's really kind of a lost cause." – *Sauer*
- “Would you rather have the conversation in your backyard where you participate, or would you rather have the conversation happened across the street where you can't participate?” – *Sauer on companies concerned to share their support of animal agriculture in fear of critics*
- “The farm family hog farm looks like a corporate hog farm and modern technology is in both, and they're both operating in a good way.” – *Leeth*

- “I don't think there's one way that any one company is going to communicate about [sustainability], and I don't think there's a best or worst way to do it. I think it's about connecting with those consumers in an authentic way.” – *Johannes*
- "It is not just about throwing facts and science and figures at people. It's earning trust, it's listening to understand that everyone isn't comfortable, everyone doesn't understand." – *Sauer*

#### Key Messages:

- Sustainability has evolved to challenge what sustainability was in the past to continuous improvement today.
- When writing about animal agriculture, the words and images we choose make a difference whether your intended audience is the agriculture community or general public.
- For food brands, it's important to be very clear about what labels and terminology are defined as for that brand to facilitate consumer understanding.
- When looking for ways to talk about animal agriculture, it doesn't have to be a big opportunity or story but what are the small places where you can lean into the conversation and share?
- We all need to be involved in efforts to share the stories of animal agriculture.
- We are already making a difference to reach consumers. Small improvements have a huge impact.

## “Obstacles to Opportunities: Connecting and Engaging Online and Beyond”

#### Speaker:

- Michelle Miller, “The Farm Babe”

#### Quotes:

- “If we do not talk about agriculture, who will?” – *Miller*
- “We have mommy bloggers that have trusted tribes. People listen to their friends on Facebook over their doctors. Not that they necessarily don't trust their doctors, it's just that maybe they don't get an opportunity to talk to them, and it's just easy to listen to your trusted voices of that friendship circle.” – *Miller*
- “Just goes to show that sometimes something as simple as a tweet can make a difference.” – *Miller on how she was able to start conversations with Burger King*
- “We need to be more proactive instead of reactive.” – *Miller*
- “There's a lot of things we can't control, right? We can't control market price, we can't control the weather. There's a lot of things we can't control, but we can control the perception.” – *Miller*
- “We have to talk to people outside of our bubbles and invite them in and show them and open our barn doors for them.” – *Miller*
- “It's up to us as an industry coming together to decide to start at the basics and make it interesting and digestible.” – *Miller*

#### Key Messages:

- Stepping out of your comfort zone is one of the greatest ways to reach consumers.

- People can say whatever they want online - whether it's true or not - which makes it important to do your research before falling for misinformation.
- Positive marketing works and bringing all stakeholders to the table is important.
- Social media is a great way to reach people, but it's not the only way.
  - Engaging with policymakers, at farmers markets, in grocery stores, with local media, and at schools and conferences are also great ways to reach consumers.
- Working with influencers is one of the best ways to get our story out there outside of the ag bubble.
- You're never going to get anyone in your corner by being rude. This includes forms of agriculture that pit themselves against another. We're all in this together.

## Virtual Summit Day 1: May 5, 2021

### “Fighting Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19”

#### Speaker:

- Timothy Caulfield, Professor of Health Law and Science Policy, University of Alberta

#### Quotes:

- "Misinformation is being normalized, which means that it's having a greater impact on people's lives." – *Caulfield*
- “Basically, what's happening here is people are using language like “liberty” and “consent” and “choice” – all these intuitively appealing ideological ideas to draw people into a community and that allows them to sidestep the science.” – *Caulfield*
- “Be cautious if something comes from your favorite celebrity.” – *Caulfield on celebrities being large contributors to the spread of misinformation*
- “You can be direct while correcting [misinformation], but I still think you want to have a tone that engages the community, and that allows that ongoing conversation.” – *Caulfield*

#### Key Messages:

- COVID-19 is a hotspot for misinformation and conspiracy theories.
- There's often a “false balance” where both sides of conflicting views think they are right.
- Misinformation campaigns are often used to incite fear to sell certain narratives or products.
- When it comes to documentaries, the perceived credibility of the information presented is associated with the quality of the film. The higher quality the film, the more viewers will believe the information is true, even if it's not.
- Those who believe misinformation and conspiracy theories are less likely to change their mind, even with new science disproving their beliefs.
- The vast majority of misinformation debunks are effective and have an impact, especially coming from an expert.

## “America's Changing Palate: Implications and Possibilities”

### Speakers:

- Kimberly Kirchherr, MS, RD, LDN (IL), FAND, President, K2 Outcomes LLC
- Christopher DuBois, Senior Vice President, Protein Practice, IRI

### Quotes:

- “Meat has so many positive aspects, and I think it gets overlooked sometimes.” – *DuBois*
- “How can we tell our story about protein and help people meet their goals to match up with science?” – *Kirchherr*
- “We need to make sure that we're thinking about all forms of malnutrition. It needs to be culturally relevant, we're managing our natural resources, and we're doing that all in support of nutrient rich foods that we need for our health.” – *Kirchherr*
- “Think about value and values... what are people getting for the dollars that they're spending and the calories that they're eating?” – *Kirchherr*
- “[Plant-based] gets a lot of press, but it's 1 to 2% [of the protein market share]. So, growth, but let's not get too excited about what the total impact is compared to meat.” – *DuBois*

### Key Messages:

- Cooking behavior changed a lot in 2020 and those changes are expected to stick around for the next few years.
- Consumers started buying more premium products, even lower income households.
- Innovation in home appliances have increased sales in proteins like chicken wings.
- E-commerce is a trend that's seen a lot of growth, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We once travelled to our food and now our food travels to us.
- The alternative protein market is often boasted as growing quickly but it still only makes up a relatively small portion of the market.

## “Obstacle to Opportunity: Repositioning Animal Protein on the Plate”

### Moderator:

- Marianne Smith Edge, MS, RDN, LD, FADA, FAND, Founder and Principal, The AgriNutrition Edge

### Panelists:

- Rachel Kopay, Food & Agribusiness Consulting, RJK Consulting
- Rebecca Doyle, Pork Producer, Former Illinois Director of Agriculture and UN World Food Programme Director
- Jennifer Garrett, PhD, Consultant, Building Trust in Food and Agriculture



## Quotes:

- “Even though consumers may not consider [national dietary guidelines] a top priority, what we have to realize is that they do influence policy.” – *Smith-Edge*
- "What we deem as sustainable diets will last for the future." – *Smith-Edge*
- "Animal proteins are not going away, but our consumers are looking for a variety and looking for balance." – *Smith-Edge*
- "Traditionally, ‘healthy’ was based on nutrient content and informed by experts. Increasingly, consumers are viewing healthy in a different way, with demands for clean labels and greater transparency." – *Kopay*
- “We are a strong, mature industry. We are the big dog everyone else is trying to take down.” – *Doyle*
- "We believe that sustainability commitments in social, economic and environmental areas will actually help you as a business address your risks and opportunities along the value chain." – *Garrett*

## Key Messages:

- The concept of “healthy diet” is now associated with “sustainable” food systems and whether or not it aligns with individual values.
- Two thirds of consumers are concerned about impacts that food production may have on climate change.
- Innovation in animal agriculture will help producers remain cost competitive.
- Sustainability is a continuous process and a long-term investment. Investors are increasingly looking for companies to demonstrate they can minimize risk while increasing opportunity through sustainability initiatives.
- As incomes rise, demand for animal proteins also rises.

## “Changing the Narrative: Animal Agriculture as a Path Forward to Climate Neutrality”

### Speaker:

- Frank Mitloehner, PhD, Professor and Director, Clarity and Leadership for Environmental Awareness and Research (CLEAR) Center, University of California, Davis

### Quotes:

- “Methane is a so-called short-lived climate pollutant, and the other ones are long-lived climate pollutants.” – *Mitloehner*
- “Constant [in terms of number of livestock] livestock herds do not add additional warming to our planet.” – *Mitloehner*
- “Methane is produced and destroyed at almost equal rates.” – *Mitloehner*
- “I believe animal agriculture in the United States can be and will be on a path to climate neutrality. I think it's really high time now to explain to people why methane is different, why it's important to understand that it's different, why it's important for us to understand that there are atmospheric removals occurring and that's important for the accounting but also that further reductions of methane have a very positive impact on our climate.” – *Mitloehner*

- “That's what sustainability is all about – making more with less.” – *Mitloehner*
- “It is largely the same people who criticize the animal agriculture industries today who have done it over the last few decades, but originally they came from a different angle of animal welfare, animal rights, and to talk about food safety and pink slime and all of that stuff, and now it's climate, and from there, they're moving on to biodiversity and so on. They will never stop.” – *Mitloehner*
- “We should confirm to a public that largely is in favor of [animal] products that these products are produced in a responsible way, that they are produced using practices that are state of the art, world class - the world envies us for that.” – *Mitloehner*

#### Key Messages:

- Globally, animal agriculture only accounts for 0.5% of greenhouse gas emissions.
- There are sources in the world for methane, but there also almost just as many sinks to remove methane from the air.
- If herd sizes remained the same over time, there would not be any new methane introduced and warming would not increase from cattle.
  - Stock gases like CO<sub>2</sub> from burning fossil fuels will accumulate over time because they stay in the environment.
  - Flow gases like methane from cattle will stay stagnant because they are destroyed at the same rate they're emitted.
- The animal agriculture community is using new technologies to convert biogases from animal manure into renewable energy sources.
- One person would have to go vegan for two years to offset the emissions of just one flight to Europe for a single passenger.
- Food choices are personal decisions, and no one should tell you that you have to take a certain food group off the table.

## Virtual Summit Day 2: May 6, 2021

### “Pivoting During a Pandemic: Offering New Options to Consumers”

#### Speakers:

- Jared Achen, Founder and CEO, ChopLocal
- Katie Olthoff, Co-Founder and Director of Marketing and Vendor Relations, ChopLocal

#### Quotes:

- “One of the first decisions that we made as partners was that we would not allow any disparaging marketing to occur on our platform.” – *Olthoff*
- “Our vendors are free to use marketing claims like organic or grass-fed as long as they meet the USDA labeling requirements for those claims, but they cannot put down other farmers or production methods.” – *Olthoff*
- “We have seen plant-based protein companies and tech companies in ag get started in Silicon Valley. Where and how can we build this based in agriculture, for agriculture, and are we all willing to support it together?” – *Achen*

- “We think that direct marketing and increasing transparency is one of the best ways for the livestock industry to compete against alternative proteins.” – *Olthoff*
- “I felt like I had operated in the status quo for so long, and it took a disruption in the market to make me look at alternatives and what can we change to get better and serve our consumers.” – *Achen*

#### **Key Messages:**

- When the grocery shelves went empty during the pandemic, consumers increasingly started purchasing meat online.
- Modern meat eaters want convenient purchasing, high-quality products and a transparent supply chain.
- Conventional and niche agriculture provide consumers with a variety of products to choose from.
- Consumers transitioning to alternative proteins are doing so because they believe it's better for the environment and the animals, but they also think meat coming directly from a farmer or small processor meets that criteria as well.

### **“Overcoming Obstacles: Activist Update & Security Advice”**

#### **Speakers:**

- John Sancenito, President, INA, Inc.
- James Naugle, Assistant Sheriff, Sonoma County (California) Sheriff's Office
- Nancy Daigneault, Principal & Founder, On Point Communications

#### **Quotes:**

- “Reporters are always looking for the most emotional type story possible. If it's conflict and controversy, and if it's emotional, that is the story.” – *Daigneault*
- “When you're dealing with animal agriculture, unfortunately the animals will be portrayed as the victims; animal rights activists, the heroes; and the animal use industry unfortunately will be the villains.” – *Daigneault*
- “Take a good look at your farm and think about it the way the activists would think about it. So, how would you attack your own farm? What are your own vulnerabilities?” – *Sancenito*
- “It's absolutely critical that you have a relationship with whatever [law enforcement] jurisdiction you're in.” – *Naugle*
- “I think that this is an industry problem, and that definitely activism is not localized to one coast or the other. They're going to go wherever their targets are.” – *Sancenito*

#### **Key Messages:**

- COVID-19 had little impact on activism as many activists had more time on their hands.
- It's important to have a plan and be prepared for activist activity - whether or not you think you will actually be targeted.
- Law enforcement has to balance First Amendment rights with the rights of the property owner. The balance tips when activists enter your property, disrupt business, or take your property.

- When reporters tell a story, they convey a victim, villain, and hero.
- In a crisis, never minimize the situation, especially if visuals tell the story. Commit to addressing the issue.
- Turn negative questions into positive answers in media interviews or your responses will become clickbait headlines.

## “Navigating the Legal Landscape”

### Speakers:

- Michelle Pardo, Partner, Duane Morris LLP
- Brianna Schroeder, Partner, Janzen Schroeder Ag Law

### Quotes:

- “Slander is spoken. Defamation and libel are written. And again, truth is the defense.” – *Schroeder*
- “If you have been victimized or targeted by [nuisance] suits like this, keep great records because down the road that can help your attorney or law enforcement to make sure that you receive the full protection of the law.” – *Schroeder*
- “Activists like to sue the federal government and agencies to invalidate laws, regulations and agency action. They also keep us busy with complaints to federal and state agencies in order to launch investigations or to push through enforcement actions.” – *Pardo*
- “Do what you say that you're going to do in your policies and your operating procedures and in your marketing and advertising.” – *Pardo*

### Key Messages:

- Trespassing laws are complex and vary a lot across the country. Make sure you know what is needed in your state to protect against activist activity.
- Lawsuits from activist groups have been targeting labeling on animal protein as “consumer fraud.”
- Legal personhood cases are being pushed through by activist groups but none have been successful.
- Ensure you are accurate in the marketing and advertising of animal products to avoid consumer fraud claims.
- Adherence to animal welfare programs can help prove that you are going above and beyond in caring for your animals.
- An effective training and compliance program, including a way to report animal welfare issues, will go a long way in litigation.

## “Creating Opportunities to Elevate Farmer Voices”

### Speakers:

- Markie Hageman, Beef Rancher and Founder, Girls Eat Beef Too

- Alexander Strauch, Poultry Veterinarian
- Jennifer Osterholt, Farmer and Blogger, Plowing Through Life
- Brandi Buzzard, Owner, High Bar Cattle Company

#### Quotes:

- “Practice [communications] during times of peace so you can perform during times of war.” – *Strauch*
- “I have concerns about the environment too... farmers and ranchers want to be a part of the conversation.” – *Buzzard*
- “You can learn. You can do it. You’ve just got to keep going.” – *Osterholt on farmers and veterinarians engaging on social media*
- “How likely are we going to be invited to the table if we’re just ticked off farmers and ranchers?” – *Buzzard*
- “Be a person that someone else wants to go to, to ask questions or learn more about food and agriculture.” – *Hageman*

#### Key Messages:

- If enough people get angry at a company, they may retract what originally caused the anger, but it won’t open lines of communications or build a relationship moving forward.
- It’s more effective to initiate conversations about animal agriculture and specific issues than to criticize negative and false information.
- When you get negative comments, passionate and aggressive responses are not helpful. You have to look at it objectively and respond politely (if at all).
- When it comes to engaging on social media, consistency and fresh content is key.
- When asked sensitive questions on social media about farming practices or hot topics, we have to give the person the benefit of the doubt because oftentimes they are genuinely curious and want to learn more.

**Save the date! We look forward to seeing you in Kansas City for next year’s Stakeholders Summit May 11-12, 2022!**