



2023 Stakeholders Summit Highlights Report

May 4-5, 2023 | Arlington, Virginia



Summit Overview

The 2023 Animal Agriculture Alliance Stakeholders Summit was held in Arlington, Va. May 4-5 and attracted nearly 320 attendees. The annual Summit is a one-of-a-kind conference attended by a diverse group of decision makers, including representatives from farms, ranches, allied industries, food processors, restaurants, grocery stores, legislatures, universities, government agencies and media. The 2023 Summit featured a dynamic group of speakers from across commodities and the food supply chain. Attendees were able to learn how to do their part to help protect, sustain, and advance our entire community.

The 2023 Summit was themed **“Partners in Progress: Building a Sustainable Future for Animal Ag.”** How can we create a sustainable future for animal agriculture? By building it together. And the 2023 Stakeholders Summit was an important opportunity to help take the incredible progress we’ve already made to new heights. It offered a chance to partner with stakeholders throughout the food chain and across commodities. To share ideas and form connections that will elevate the farm and food communities in ways that lift everyone. To collaborate toward vital progress. And to learn how you can do your part to help protect, sustain, and advance our entire community.

For more information on the annual Stakeholders Summit, visit <https://animalagalliance.org/Initiatives/Stakeholders-Summit/>.

“Farmers Versus Foodies: A Look at the Outside Forces Forging the Future of Farming and Food”

Speaker:

- Ray Starling, General Counsel, North Carolina Chamber

Summary:

There is an epic battle going on over who will call the shots for the agriculture and food system of the future. On one side are “insiders” who understand the food system and are rightly proud of it. On the other side are “outsiders” who champion the in-vogue notion that the food system is “broken. These competing visions for the future of food and farming will ultimately

take us to very different destinations. In his keynote, Starling discussed what he calls the “farmer versus foodie conundrum” that has the potential to impact food security for generations to come and how the food and farming communities can bridge the gap.



Quotes:

- “We [people involved in food production] think we're doing a pretty good job, arguably. I mean, I agree with you. And then there's this whole world of folks out there that seem to want to tell everyone else how horrible we are, how inhumane we are, fill in the verb of choice...” – *Starling*
- “You can [ask Google], ‘Is the food system broken?,’ and I do this about two or three days before I give a presentation, and it never changes. The first eight pages essentially answer the question. ‘Yes, the food system is broken.’” – *Starling*
- “[It’s] not surprising when animal activists say the food system is broken. We know what their motivations are.” – *Starling*
- “If we look at what we were producing with one man hour of labor after World War II in agriculture and compare it to what we're doing today, [we are] 1600 times as productive with one hour of labor. No other industry comes even close.” – *Starling*
- “The irony of the agriculture sector is that we are more and more reliant on outside money to help us take care of our capital needs.” – *Starling*
- “What we are seeing happen on the other side is a strategic, targeted, well-funded, and coordinated attack. It is not that they're hiring a social media influencer and all of a sudden people don't like where their food comes from.” – *Starling*
- “In reality, most people actually still like farmers. They are grateful for the system, and they don't really think a lot about agriculture.” – *Starling*
- “I think at the end of the day, the facts are on our side, and I definitely think the moral argument is on our side.” – *Starling*

Key Messages:

- The internet, Google, and even artificial intelligence will say that the current food system is “broken” if asked.
- There are two sides to the food system discussion – those that think the food system is “broken” and those that think the food system is the best it’s ever been. These differences can’t be seen across rural vs. urban, older vs. younger, or Republican vs. Democrat – it’s actually “outsiders” vs “insiders.”
- Many topics affect this “outsiders” vs. “insiders” (or farmers vs. foodies) mindset. Some of the largest influences are money, politics, and legal forces.
- 15-20 years ago agriculture received monetary influence primarily from consumers; 5-15 years ago it was retailer influence; today it’s investor influence.
- Agriculture does not have as much political representation as it did in the past. In 1953, 15-20% of members of congress were agrarians, while in 2020 less than 5% were agrarians.
- Many law schools are promoting the idea that our food system is “broken” and that modern animal agriculture is “industrial” and harmful to the environment.
- There is a lack of positive literature surrounding animal agriculture. When law students use Google Scholar or look for sources to back up their claims, they find a lot of anti-animal agriculture rhetoric.

“Connecting from the Farm Gate to the Dinner Plate: Understanding the NextGen Consumer”

Speaker:

- Danielle Cummins, Senior Intelligence Analyst, Aimpoint Research

Summary:

From the farm gate to dinner plate, our food system is experiencing an unprecedented rate of change and shifting consumer preferences are part of what is driving this evolution. Propelled by five macro forces, the next generations of consumers are completely transforming the way we relate to brands, products, and the environment. Combined, these five macro focuses are leading to a rise in "Food Consciousness" not only across continents, but across all generations. During her Summit session, Aimpoint Research’s Danielle Cummins discussed how, in a time of rapid transformation, the entire food system will need to determine how to maintain relevance. Cummins shared how restaurants, retailers, distributors, food processors, farmers, and all businesses involved in the agri-food value chain can be vigilant, adaptable, innovative, and proactive when it comes to building relationships and meeting consumer demands, including creating visibility from field to shelf.



Quotes:

- “Food security is part of national security, and you can’t really have one without the other.” – *Cummins*
- “It’s really easy to talk about the consumer as this group of people or group of things that are far off, that are not tangible, but when I’m talking about a consumer today, I challenge you all to instead of hearing ‘consumer’ hear ‘customer’ and how that directly relates and impacts decisions you all make, whether it be on farm or major industry decisions. So, we have to address these things as a personal customer experience, not just some big wild consumer group that has no place. I’m a consumer, we’re all consumers. Let’s try to make sure we’re looking at the data this way.” – *Cummins*
- “By 2050, no specific racial or ethnic group will constitute the majority of the U.S. population, and this will continue to drive the diversity that they are going to demand in terms of food choice.” – *Cummins*
- “The consumer wants to know the source and where things are being produced and how that food and beverage product is being produced. And this is not trust in the food company. This is trust in the farmer... They want to know that the farmer has their best interests in mind when they’re planting that seed, when they’re growing that cattle, that they’re doing things responsibly.” – *Cummins*
- “We have to figure out how to incorporate these consumer demands and needs so that we can continue to win at that protein plate.” – *Cummins*
- “What the trends are showing us is that the protein plate really looks something like this, where consumers are incorporating an animal protein as well as an alternative protein whether it be cell-based or plant-based or even insect-based.” – *Cummins*
- “The ‘food is medicine’ trend is taking off and the healthcare industry is highly invested in this because it impacts the healthcare industry and insurance.” – *Cummins*
- “Millennials and Gen Z are more likely to purchase the products that have the sustainability talking point or climate change packaging.” – *Cummins*
- “The nice part about [sustainability] is that agriculture, to some extent, is viewed as the shining star. We are the solution to this, and I think that there’s a story there that we can continue to tell, continue to elaborate on and incorporate to meet that consumer where they are.” – *Cummins*
- “The consumer of tomorrow is different. They want all of the things. They want health. They want freshness. They want something that is going to make them feel good about that purchase, feel good about what they’re putting into their bodies or into their families’. They want things that are personalized to them that not only impacts their health but also the environment.” – *Cummins*
- “It’s not just about facts. It’s not just about education. It’s about that issue of trust. But, building a context around that label, I think is really important.” – *Cummins on food labeling*

Key Messages:

- We need to look at consumers and customers as tangible people, not far-off beings that are unreachable.
- Shared values tend to drive consumer trust more than facts.
- Building trust is the best way to influence consumers to purchase animal proteins and feel good about it.
- 63% of people say knowing the source of their food increases their trust.

- Current food trends include:
 - People looking for fresh foods with fewer chemicals, preservatives, and additives.
 - Looking for foods that are high in protein and fiber, low calorie, and provide a healthy fat source.
 - Seeking personalized experiences and food recommendations, including an increased interest in using “food as medicine.”
 - People looking for sustainable food options and packaging.
- Many consumers are unsure of what food labels truly mean, so we need to work at building more context around food labeling.
- Despite being an ultra-processed food, consumers are seeing alternative proteins as having significant health benefits when compared to animal proteins.

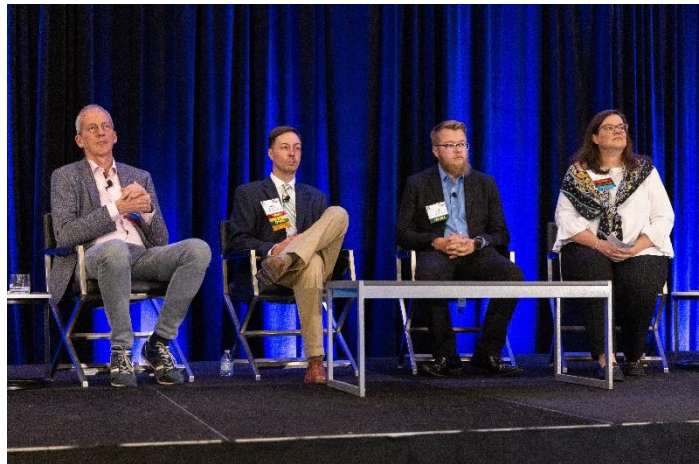
“Technology in Agriculture: Building on Sustainability Progress”

Moderator:

- Sarah Little, Vice President of Communications, North American Meat Institute

Speakers:

- Johan van Arendonk, PhD, Chief Innovation & Technology Officer, Hendrix Genetics
- Paul Davis, PhD, Director of Animal Food Safety, American Feed Industry Association
- Austin Gellings, Director, Agricultural Services, Association of Equipment Manufacturers



Summary:

Agricultural technology is taking strides to help build a sustainable future across many sectors. In this session, attendees heard Austin Gellings of the Association of Equipment Manufacturing, Dr. Paul Davis with the American Feed Industry Association, and Dr. Johan van Arendonk of Hendrix Genetics discuss new developments including the dairy community’s journey to net zero by 2050, new collaborative initiatives within the feed sector, and what it means to set the standard for sustainable animal breeding.

Quotes:

- “Animal genetics continue to contribute to a more sustainable approach.” – *van Arendonk*
- “More sustainability progress can be realized by applying these technologies.” – *van Arendonk on emerging technologies*

- “We do have to have the ability to harness the technology that our engineers and scientists can create and come up with. We need to be able to bring those to the market, get them out there, and get them in the U.S.” – *Davis*
- “When we improve production efficiency, we inherently improve sustainability.” – *Davis*
- “We want to start with the right machine [genetically capable animals] and then provide the right fuels: environment, comfort, feed, animal health, all the things that we put into those good genetically capable animals.” – *Davis*
- “We're making really great strides from a sustainability standpoint as a result of technology.” – *Gellings*
- “Upscaling technology takes away from the monotonous tasks that farmers don't necessarily love to do. You know, I don't love going into a chicken coop with a shovel and having to shovel it out by hand. I'd rather have a robot do that for me.” – *Gellings*
- “The data shows that we are better [than ever], and we're moving in the right direction.” – *Gellings*

Key Messages:

- Animal genetics will continue to contribute to producing sustainable meat, dairy, poultry, eggs, and seafood.
- Genetics have contributed to sustainability improvements by increasing feed efficiency, survival rates, producing better-quality products, improving animal welfare, and increasing robustness, which is the ability to handle different qualities of feed and fluctuations in environmental conditions.
- We need to match an animal's ability to the inputs that we provide in order to get the output that we want.
- When feed and production efficiency is improved, we are inherently making progress in sustainability.
- To increase full adoption of technology to move sustainability progress forward, we need:
 - Policies that reward innovation.
 - To grow farm income, which means more capital to invest in farms and facilities.
 - To improve enabling infrastructure, such as rural broadband.
 - To improve communication with consumers and build trust in science.

“Supply Chain Sustainability: Practical Lessons from the Field to the Corporate Office”

Moderator:

- Sara Crawford, PhD, President, Sustainable Environmental Consultants

Speakers:

- Matt Fry, Owner/Operator, Fair Hill Farms
- Katherine Staiger, Project Manager, Regenerative Agriculture, Danone North America



- Angela Anderson, Director, Sustainable Dairy, Starbucks

Summary:

Sustainability efforts include all stakeholders, from farmers to food brands. Dr. Sara Crawford of Sustainable Environmental Consultants led a discussion featuring each link of the food chain, including farmer, food brand and restaurant perspectives. This session highlighted a collaborative effort to merge science and data with real change and show the value of having the right partners on the journey. Attendees at all stages of the process learned valuable lessons on how to create and implement a successful sustainability program, whether they are just starting to set goals or have already set their goals but aren't sure how to drive positive change.

Quotes:

- “The concept of sustainability is inherent to us as producers, especially when we come from multi-generational operations. You know, if we weren't sustainable, we wouldn't be in business.” – *Fry*
- “The biggest hurdle is just getting started. When you're getting started, it seems like it's a monumental task, but once you're in the system, it's very easy to continue operating.” – *Fry*
- “I think the very first step is building up your team, right, and realizing that we need two specific skillsets. We need the skillset to be very knowledgeable about the GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions and the modeling and data analysis... You also really need that agricultural expertise.” – *Staiger*
- “Our program is voluntary, and I personally think that has been the key to our success is that our farms are interested in this, and they do not feel like it is a mandate. Instead it's an opportunity.” – *Staiger*
- “We really recognize that there is no silver bullet, and there's no prescription to the perfect regenerative agriculture or sustainable farm.” – *Staiger*
- “Be very individualized with the farms that you're working with. Respect that they're the experts.” – *Staiger*
- “We learned very quickly from some very vocal farmers what was working, what was not, and we listened, and so we would adapt and change and try to rethink this.” – *Anderson*
- “Sustainability is the hottest talked about item when it comes to these areas... and you better have a plan in place.” – *Anderson on environmental, social, and governance reporting*

Key Messages:

- Sustainability improvements can often be overwhelming to many farmers given there are no standard practices across commodity groups.
- Farmers are spread thin between farm work, family obligations, etc. so it's important to have partners that support them and make it easy to make improvements.
- Sustainability partners provide insights that help direct the strategic plan for the farm but not necessarily the day-to-day.
- Opportunities to partner and strengthen relationships with environmental groups when sharing more about sustainability practices on-farm are important.
- Early adopters usually reap the benefits of new opportunities.
- Farmers need to see the return on investments (ROI) because sustainability initiatives are not where their paycheck comes from. At the end of the day, they still need to be able to support their business and their families.

- To implement a sustainability plan within the supply chain, you should start with a pilot program, be a partner, not a parent, and set measurable goals.
- Sustainability will be a long-term factor in buying decisions and sourcing policies.
- Reporting is a critical aspect for brands as a verification step to make sure what's being said is being done is actually happening.
- Consumer-facing brands should keep an eye on the forest – look at the full picture, hear consumer and shareholder voices and remember that supplier support matters. Make sure you're having conversations all the way back through the supply chain, not just one step back.

“Telling Your Story: Understanding Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting”

Moderator:

- Marcy Tessmann, President and CEO, C.O.nxt

Speakers:

- Christina Lood, Senior Director, Innovation and Sustainability Communications, Zoetis
- Sydney Reese, PhD, Director of Research, Performance and Sustainability, Prime Pursuits
- Cassie Jo Arend, Account Manager, Agriculture, Shift • ology Communication



Summary:

When it comes to sustainability, the animal agriculture community needs to be able to both walk the walk and talk the talk. Communicating our progress and goals to the right audiences in a compelling way is essential to a sustainable future. Driving positive concerns with media, investors and others can be a challenge, and it takes a strategic effort that requires a commitment to invest in key initiatives to make it believable as you tell your story. That's where Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) comes in. A CSR platform is good for any organization but essential for any that deal with misinformation and loud adversarial voices which is the unfortunate reality for the animal agriculture community. Led by Marcy Tessman of C.O.nxt, a panel of industry representatives including Cassie Jo Arend, Shiftology, shared their do's and don'ts of building your own CSR platform in this session.

Quotes:

- “We know that healthy animals can really lead to a healthier world.” – *Lood*
- “Healthier animals can help achieve sustainability goals.” – *Lood*
- “You have to define what does sustainability mean for you because it can mean so many different things.” – *Lood*
- “If a business is not able to continue, there's nothing sustainable about that.” – *Lood*
- “One thing I have learned is if you flip the word from ‘sustainability’ to ‘stewardship,’ we get ... so much more reception.” – *Reese*

- “Having those connections and hiring those people that make those bridges is really, really important.” – *Reese on communicating with stakeholders*
- “If you’re doing social responsibility correctly, you should always be changing and making improvements because those are priorities for you when you’re setting goals.” – *Arend*
- “You will not know everything.” – *Arend on getting started with CSR reporting*

Key Messages:

- When starting out with CSR reporting, you have to prioritize what’s most important – you can’t please every stakeholder or reach all of your goals all at once.
- Farmers and ranchers are sometimes more receptive to discussions around the idea of “stewardship” rather than “sustainability.”
- Some farmers might have concerns that “sustainability” is just a fad and a marketing tactic that will eventually go away. It’s important for others in the agricultural community to engage with them around understanding that it’s here to stay so they need to get involved in doing their part.
- Identify reporting priorities based on what’s most important to your organization’s goals, mission, and stakeholders.
- Research what other companies are doing to help identify goals and where your organization could or should move into the future.

“Partners Around the Plate: Shifting the Conversation About Food”

Moderator:

- Kelly Bristow, MS, RDN, Global Nutrition Affairs Lead, Bayer

Speakers:

- Nicole Rodriguez, RDN, Owner, Enjoy Food. Enjoy Life./Step Bite Step
- Michele Payn, Author, Food Bullying, Food Truths from Farm to Table, No More Food Fights

Summary:

Today’s society often oversimplifies complex topics (including agriculture) and vilifies certain food groups, but is there a way to co-exist? In this session, Food Bullying podcast hosts Michele Payn, CSP, and Nicole Rodriguez, RDN, led attendees through an interactive discussion that provided them with practical ideas to engage consumers in conversations about food and farming that are both meaningful and productive. The session helped attendees discover how meeting people where they are can drive conversations and engage consumers in a more impactful way and understand ways to capitalize on farmers and dietitians as trusted sources of information when it comes to food and farming.



Quotes:

- “There’s this huge disconnect around who’s talking about our food supply and who is actually connected to it.” – *Bristow*
- “It’s so important to draw across the plate.” – *Bristow on making partners along the supply chain*
- “It’s not always about changing minds... It’s about providing exposure and opportunities for someone that might not be like-minded to, maybe, change or be, maybe, even pushed to think outside of what they believe to be true.” – *Bristow*
- “You’re going to have someone in your audience that is just not going to agree with you, and for me, from experience, becoming defensive doesn’t necessarily move the needle. So, it’s not always an easy thing to do, but saying ‘I hear you, I’m trying to understand where you’re coming from, this is the evidence that I’m sharing today...’” – *Bristow*
- “The dietitian community has a unique lens in which we can connect with, and there are a lot of opportunities to build their interest in and engage them in the agriculture story.” – *Payn*
- “Food should be about celebration. It should not be about condemnation, confusion, bullying, and when I hear stories of people having a psychological problem, a disease, because they’ve been fed so much crap about food, I think we have a responsibility to do things a little bit differently.” – *Payn*
- “I think a lot of times it’s not about changing minds... but having the opportunity to offer information so that everyone can make the best choice.” – *Rodriguez*
- “Plants need animals. Animals need plants.” – *Rodriguez*
- “Dietitians want a seat at your table... Please engage with us because we’re willing, we’re able and genuinely want to help you get the messages out to those families.” – *Rodriguez*
- “We have a responsibility to hold each other accountable.” – *Payn*

Key Messages:

- We need to connect with others on an emotional level before you can share the data.
- A “plant-based” diet does not need to exclude animal proteins.
- Animal proteins can often play a role in helping people get more fruits and vegetables in their diet.
- Animals and plants need each other, it goes both ways. Animal ag should focus on the moveable middle.
- If you truly know your topic, you should be able to explain it in a way that meets people where they’re at.
- There are micronutrient concerns in vegan diets, it’s very hard to eat well as a vegan and get the nutrients that you need.
- There needs to be a network of contacts from across the supply chain and commodities.
- Organizations can optimize support from registered dietitians by providing social media-friendly toolkits.

“Engaging with Consumers: From A to ‘Gen Z’”

Moderator:

- Amanda Lucey, CEO, The Partnership

Speakers:

- Roxi Beck, Director, Consumer Engagement, The Center for Food Integrity
- Emily DeSousa, Fisheries Scientist and Sustainable Seafood Educator, Seaside with Emily
- Cassidy Johnston, Beef Rancher and Consultant, Not Your Average Rancher



Summary:

Generation Z is poised to change the face of food.

This emerging consumer segment brings a distinct set of values, behaviors, and purchasing power undergirded by pressing questions about the values of those producing our food, production practices, and the impact on people, animals, and the planet. Expert communicator Roxi Beck of The Center for Food Integrity, sustainable seafood educator Emily De Sousa of Seaside with Emily, and rancher Cassidy Johnston of Not Your Average Rancher explored how to engage “Gen Z” and other groups effectively based on both research and personal experience.

Quotes:

- “Values are important and so is science, but they’re not treated equally.” – Beck
- “Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” - Beck
- “‘Gen Z’ has questions that my parents wouldn’t have even thought to ask.” – DeSousa
- “They want to feel like they’re a part of your life.” – DeSousa on connecting with ‘Gen Z’ through social media
- “People want to understand science, and they want to feel like they are a part of something, and they don’t want to feel like they’re being spoken at. They want to be spoken to.” – DeSousa
- “Wherever you think they’re starting from... take 10 steps back.” – DeSousa on meeting consumers at their level of knowledge and understanding
- “Social media is one of the most effective vehicles for communicating, especially with the younger generation.” – DeSousa
- “When we’re talking about agriculture, we don’t need to lead with agriculture.” – Johnston on how to start connecting with others
- “The questions people are asking may not actually really be what they’re wondering about, but they don’t know how to say it. They don’t have the right words because this is not their wheelhouse.” – Johnston
- “We need to seek and build relationships wherever possible.” – Johnston

Key Messages:

- You have to establish your ethics and that you share the same values before verifying what you're saying through science.
- Transparency is imperative.
- Dialogue is the key – it's not just about communicating and sharing information. Listen thoughtfully and ask questions to find out where they're starting from.
- “Gen Z” wants experiences that get them engaged and makes them feel like they have a backstage pass.
- We must meet people where they are starting from, which is often at a low level of knowledge about animal agriculture.
- Take the time to listen to consumers – read through social media comments, listen to their questions, etc.
- Americans see sustainability through the lens of animal welfare.
- “Gen Z” just wants to see others' lives. The easiest way to begin communicating with them is by sharing your day-to-day life.

“Speaking Bullishly: How to Talk About Animal Ag’s Path Forward”

Speaker:

- Joe Proudman, Associate Director for Communications, University of California, Davis CLEAR Center

Summary:

The conversation around animal agriculture is not always positive nor reflective of public sentiment around consuming animal-sourced foods. In this session Joe Proudman, associate director of the CLEAR Center at U.C. Davis, shed light on how the food and farming communities can speak bullishly about the future of animal agriculture and its sustainability progress. Proudman’s presentation focused on how members of the animal agriculture community can build content across platforms and use multiple techniques to share science-based and nuanced information, push back against misinformation, and confront extremist tactics that sometimes dominate the headlines. Furthermore, Proudman discussed the need for the animal agriculture community to move beyond defensive communications and speak confidently about achievements made.



Quotes:

- “That firsthand experience, that firsthand knowledge, is getting further and further away.” - *Proudman on people becoming removed from farms*
- “If we're going to achieve sustainability, we not only have to do the research, but we need to talk about it. We talked about sustainability with our consumers, with policymakers, with regulators, and with each other. We're going to get much better at achieving that. It's not just

a research problem, not just a passion problem. It's absolutely communications and to be involved." – *Proudman*

- "Animal sourced foods can be part of the climate solution." – *Proudman*
- "Social algorithms lead to engaging only with people that have similar beliefs, creating a bubble - an online space which only reinforces their belief." – *Proudman*

Key Messages:

- As time goes on, people are becoming more removed from farms.
- In general, the largest mainstream media outlets have few to no dedicated agriculture reporters. Those that do write about agriculture are not usually informed about modern agriculture.
- In 2021, the majority of people got their news from social media sites like Twitter and Facebook.
- People think that what they see on their social media feed is “news” but don’t understand that algorithms push you more of what you’ve already seen.
- How to speak confidently:
 - Be authentic and take away transparency.
 - Be simple.
 - Be bullish about what you’re doing.
- 70% of all funding for agriculture research and development comes from the private sector. The people that matter aren’t as concerned about funding sources of research as animal rights and environmental groups are.

“Practical Solutions: Responding to Animal Rights Extremism in 2023”

Speakers:

- Jim Newman, Communications Director, Americans for Medical Progress
- Jason Roesler, Independent Security Consultant
- Andrea Bertaglio, Campaign Manager, European Livestock Voice



Summary:

Animal rights extremists remain hostile to animal agriculture and their efforts to take meat, poultry, dairy and eggs off of our consumers’ plates could undermine food security and our efforts to produce sustainable, affordable food. How can the animal agriculture and food community handle these security threats? In this session, attendees heard from experts including Jason Roesler, an independent security consultant with a background in the fur community, and Jim Newman, director of strategic communications, Americans for Medical Progress, as they shared the latest trends in activism as well as relevant, practical takeaways to protect themselves and their livelihood from extremists.

Quotes:

- “We had vandalism, damage to researchers’ cars, their driveways, billboards, anything you can think of, in regards to activism.” – *Newman*
- “These are people who basically make their living traveling from state to state doing these disruptions.” – *Newman*
- “When activist groups make claims, they're basically building a wall of negativity around your organization, and every single story they get filed is another brick in the wall that is really hard to break down. You have to sort of make that case to an organization and say, this is something you need to start taking seriously.” – *Newman*
- “If you don’t tell your story for yourself then the activists will do it for you.” – *Newman*
- “It doesn't matter if you do all of these things if you don't catch somebody who was on your facility until twelve hours later – the damage has been done. Make sure that you're identifying and accurately and efficiently getting security response, whether that be private security or law enforcement.” – *Roesler*
- “I would just recommend trying to get out ahead of it and have that relationship [with law enforcement] before something happens because then they're much more likely to understand the scope of this and show up and make it much more of a priority.” – *Roesler*
- “Say what you’re doing. You have nothing to hide.” – *Bertaglio on communicating and being more transparent about modern animal agriculture*
- “[Animal rights extremists] don’t really care about animal welfare.” – *Bertaglio*

Key Messages:

- Animal rights extremists are attempting to further their agenda through home protests, infiltrations, event disruptions, targeting of individuals connected to a target company, brand pressure campaigns, shareholder initiatives, legislation, and lawsuits.
- Make sure you’re aware of what’s going on in the animal rights movement so you can be prepared for potential threats.
- Proactive conversations with local law enforcement are paramount so they are ready to respond when you need them.
- Be sure to tell your story or extremists will do it for you.
- There is a large correlation between the groups and tactics used in the U.S. and Europe.
- Expand communications, continue discussing the issue, have crisis teams, continue lobbying, have partnerships across the industry and academia, continue to do media outreach, and expand your defensive efforts against extremism.

“Safeguarding the Future: Legal and Legislative Issues”

Speakers:

- Emily Lyons, Partner Attorney, Husch Blackwell LLP
- Mike Bober, President and CEO, Pet Advocacy Network



Summary:

Decisions about modern agriculture aren't just happening on the farm anymore, they're sometimes happening in the statehouse and the courthouse. In recent years, animal rights activists and other groups opposed to modern agriculture are taking their ideas to legislators to attempt to enact "big change." To learn more about safeguarding the future of animal ag, Emily Lyons, Husch Blackwell, and Mike Bober, Pet Advocacy Network, shared hot legal and legislative issues including lessons learned from false advertising litigation and how to organize a tactical plan targeting a government relations goal.



Quotes:

- “The standard that we have to follow and this is what we get stuck with as the marketers of products: our statements have to be truthful and not mislead. We also have to have a reasonable basis for that claim to support.” – *Lyons on food labeling*
- "Every industry is at risk [of false advertising lawsuits] - particularly where you are advertising or actively marketing products to consumers." – *Lyons*
- “There's an extremely low barrier to entry when it comes to litigation. It doesn't cost a lot of money to file a lawsuit. Yes, attorneys are expensive, however, you don't have to do much to meet the leading complaint rule which is, digging into things, but you can draft a complaint alleging anything.” – *Lyons*
- “That's where we're most vulnerable is when there isn't a regulation that says here's what this is, what this means, and how you have to prove it.” – *Lyons*
- “It's great that you have that certification; we don't think it's good enough. The standard you need to be following is this standard over here that's made by an independent third-party group.' And I'm going to tell you that independent third-party group when you look at their board, who wrote the standard, they are animal activists with maybe one agriculturalist or somebody who has some agriculture background but not very much.” – *Lyons on animal rights extremist “welfare” certifications*
- “Animal agriculture will continue to be susceptible and vulnerable to sustainability suits.” – *Lyons*
- “So, it's one of those things where they will post what they believe is the gold standard and expect and, I would say, almost coerce you to follow that standard.” – *Lyons on animal rights extremist “welfare” certifications*
- "What we're finding is the relationship between licensees and the regulatory agency whose job is to help them take care of animals is becoming increasingly fractious, and that's not good for anyone. It's not good for us. It's not good for the animals. It's not good for the American public. It's great for the activist groups. " – *Bober*
- "When activist groups can't attack you from the front door, they look for other ways to do it that involve the courts, that involve regulations like zoning, things that have nothing to do with your core business practice but ultimately make it all but impossible for you to do the things that you're trying to do." – *Bober*
- “They find an activist individual in a small town in rural Wisconsin, and they encourage them to reach out to the city council and say, ‘Hey, wouldn't it be great if this passed?’ As it turns

out, there's no one in that town that's affected by this and so it becomes super easy for a city council to pass something without a second thought.” – *Bober*

- “What it does is it elevates, in some states, believe it or not, it elevates the rights of animals in certain court proceedings over the rights of children, which is insane.” – *Bober on ‘personhood for pets’*
- “Don't believe that just because you're following even the letter of the law that you're not susceptible to these kinds of things.” – *Bober on extremist groups suing the animal agriculture community*

Key Messages:

- Labeling terms that do not have federal regulation noting what they mean is where the animal agriculture community is most vulnerable. Certifications can provide definitions to undefined terms.
- Legislative trends worth watching:
 - “Hide the hit” – hiding provisions in a very long bill.
 - “All politics is local-ish” – it's easier for animal rights groups to push through legislation at state and local levels than at the federal level.
 - “War by other means” – attacking things that have nothing to do with your core business practice, for example, activists can't always go to your front door but can make changes through legislation.
 - “Personhood for pets” – elevating the rights for animals over the rights of children in some states.
- The four Fs to effective constituent communications:
 - Face – legislators need to know and see your face.
 - Facts – legislators need it to back up claims or they don't have a leg to stand on.
 - Focus – legislators want to talk about a lot of things in a short meeting timeframe.
 - Follow-up – distinguishes a “what can you do for me meeting” from building a credible relationship.
- Giving awards and appreciation to legislators is legal for any organization to do, generates media attention, and reminds people of what the organization stands for.

“Growing Trust and Protecting Futures: Building Your Public Trust Communications Strategy”

Facilitators:

- Robert Mensies, Lead Strategist, Public Trustworks
- Brent Smith, Lead Strategist, Public Trustworks

Summary:

Earning public trust is about doing the right thing, assurance, verification, and communicating these commitments and tackling the communications component is key during any type of crisis situation. Robert Mensies and Brent



Smith of Public Trustworks helped attendees develop their Public Trust Communications Strategy in an interactive workshop.

Key Messages:

- Every organization's path to public trust includes doing the right thing, verifying efforts and results, and communicating it to stakeholders.
- You should identify communication goals that align with your organization's corporate strategic goals.
- Identify the most contentious issues to tackle when dealing with social currency boosters and detractors.
- It is important to understand and prioritize your target audience and evaluate their relevant needs and shared values.
- Think about the moveable middle as you come up with your strategy.
- Identify the most important messages you want to communicate to your audiences.
- Create a plan on how to reach your audience with your messages.
- It is important to identify where your peers are in terms of earning a social license.

“Factory Fundraisers: How Animal Rights Groups Exploit Animals and Donors”

Speaker:

- Jack Hubbard, Partner and Owner, Berman

Summary:

The animal rights movement today has become more diverse, sophisticated, well-funded, and coordinated. A growing number of animal rights extremist groups are driving legislation, attacking brands, pushing negative news stories and utilizing other tactics. As the dynamic of these groups changes and their fundraising continues to grow, so must our tactics, intensity, and focus. In this session, Jack Hubbard shared the true intentions and strategies behind these extremist groups and how we can safeguard our future with messages and tactics proven to diminish their exploitation of animals and donors.



Quotes:

- “Over the past two years these groups have doubled, if not more, their revenue, and they haven't even started to figure out how they're going to spend it.” – *Hubbard on the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Humane Society of the United States*
- “They want this generation to be the last generation of people raising animals for food. And if they don't do it this generation, they're going to turn their focus to your children or your grandchildren.” - *Hubbard*

- “The root of [the animal rights] movement is a very, very small group of people who have extreme, extreme radical points of view, trying to force it on the entire American public through legislation, through litigation and through a culture war. And that's what's going on every single day.” - *Hubbard*
- “What I'm concerned about is too many people, especially in some of the public facing retail brands and CPG companies, are giving these activists far too much credit, far too much oxygen. They're inviting them into the boardroom and giving them stages to give their presentations when their interests will diverge from yours in a way that frankly, basically, you all cannot exist with these people at the same time because they want you shut down. They believe that meat is murder. They believe that you exploit your workers, and they believe that you pollute the environment.” - *Hubbard*
- “If you think you can bargain with these folks, and you can say ‘hey, I'm going to introduce the Impossible burger on my menu and you're going to leave me alone’, or ‘I'm not going to use individual maternity pens anymore, and I want to transition to open housing’, or ‘I'm willing to take a look at my bird genetics, and I'm willing to reassess for this Better Chicken Commitment’... The minute you raise your hand and invite any of these people to the table, you are making yourself a target for the next campaign. It is a move-the-goal post strategy.” - *Hubbard*
- “They're trying to essentially get the food service community to dictate changes to you that will drive up costs and decrease demand. That's their game.” - *Hubbard*
- “You need to understand that offense wins and defense loses in public relations and in advocacy. If you are explaining, you're losing. If you are answering accusations, you are losing. If you are having their debate and saying, ‘I'm not that bad,’ they are controlling the narrative.” - *Hubbard*
- “The reason these groups get meetings with legislators and the reason that they're successful sometimes in their initiatives is because of their reputations. But their reputations are based on lies. The public thinks that they're the local humane organization in their backyard, they're not. And the minute you tell people that they become angry. And when people become angry, [these groups] become incredibly ineffective in their influence.” - *Hubbard*
- “We need to be creating more and more materials, putting them out there, educating the public, educating lawmakers, educating the media, about who these people really are.” - *Hubbard*
- “It's time to put them on defense. They should be answering questions, not you. They should have to explain themselves, not you. You are feeding the world.” - *Hubbard*
- “Words matter in how you all, even inside your own community talk about things, has an impact on the debate. If you start off with the wrong language, you're almost immediately likely to lose somebody.” - *Hubbard*
- “We have the truth on our side. We're pulling this information from their own tax returns. We are quoting exactly what they say about what their agenda is. So if anybody wants to have a debate about the authenticity of our points, feel free because it's all from their information.” - *Hubbard*

Key Messages:

- Animal rights groups’ funding and activity grew during COVID-19 through increased revenue, small dollar donor surge (stimulus checks), and the business community being distracted.

- Labor, environmental, and animal rights groups have come together against the animal agriculture community.
- Animal rights groups have an extreme view but represent only a small portion of people.
- Activist groups are using ESG (environmental, social, and governance investing) to gain access to organizations and become stakeholders.
- Extremist groups are effective because of their reputations, while in reality HSUS only gives 1% to local shelters.
- The ag industry needs to go on offense and make sure that activist groups answer for their spending and values.
- It is important to remember the end goal of these extremist groups is to eliminate animal agriculture.

SAVE THE DATE FOR 2024!

May 8-9, 2024 | Kansas City, Missouri