



The 2014 Global Conference on Sustainable Beef, held November 2-5 in São Paulo, Brazil, marked a unique and important milestone for the recently-formed Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB). Nearly 300 key stakeholders in the beef value chain from 21 countries, witnessed the release of the first global definition for “sustainable beef.” The Global Conference, co-hosted by GRSB and Grupo de Trabalho da Pecuária Sustentável (GTPS), examined GRSB’s Principles and Criteria for Global Sustainable Beef and cast a vision for sustainable beef’s future.

Overview

Cameron Bruett, GRSB President, opened the conference by announcing that the GRSB membership had overwhelmingly approved the Principles and Criteria — a testament to the diligent work done by the many technical working groups that lent their expertise to craft the definition. According to Bruett, “GRSB’s Principles and Criteria for Defining Sustainable Beef are a solid foundation from which various regional and local efforts can be empowered to identify sustainable solutions relevant to their particular areas and unique resource challenges.”



Bruett

With presentations from 30 experts in beef production, processing, merchandising, and sustainability worldwide, the conference engaged a broad cross-section of participants in discussions of how to continuously improve the use of resources, technologies, and processes while ensuring the people involved in the industry are protected.

Eduardo Bastos, GTPS president, welcomed attendees to Brazil and explained some of the ground-breaking sustainability work occurring in Brazil. GTPS also provided illuminating tours of cattle-producing regions of Brazil including Mato Grosso do Sul and the Alta Floresta area of the Amazon before and after the conference. GTPS and its members have been incredibly involved in developing and promoting sustainable practices in Brazil and beef producers are demonstrating how fragile ecosystems can be protected and even enhanced through stewardship.

Conference Highlights



Sanchez Lopez

Keynotes

Keynoting the conference were **Ricardo Sanchez Lopez**, former Colombian Vice-Minister of Agriculture, currently Director of Food Security, Latin America, The Nature Conservancy, and **Karin Kreider**, Executive Director of the ISEAL Alliance.

Focusing on balancing the three pillars of sustainability as well as effectively gaining consensus among stakeholders, the keynoters set the stage for a conference that informed, engaged, and invigorated the audience.

Mr. Lopez challenged the stakeholders to remain vigilant in working with the private sector and the public sector using science-based information to “make it happen.”

Ms. Kreider emphasized that in order to gain consensus it is imperative to start with clear objectives and a definition of goals, followed by advanced preparation and a willingness to work through controversial issues.



Kreider

Breakout Sessions

During concurrent breakout sessions, participants were able to gain meaningful insights in three areas: 1) Challenges of Developing Indicators and Benchmarking Sustainability, 2) Communication & Transparency with Consumers & Millennials, and 3) Developing and Deploying Effective Sustainability Tools. Within the first area, presenters and panelists discussed the development of life cycle analyses from farm to fork as well as beefing up sustainability. Speaking during this session were **Karin Kreider**, ISEAL Alliance; **Brian Lindsay**, Beef Working Group of SAI Platform; and **Dr. Kim Stackhouse**, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association.



“Being transparent with the consumer is the language of trust,” according to the panelists discussing communicating sustainability with the consuming public and “millennials.” In sharing their experiences, the presenters agreed that information is power and that power is shifting to millions of individuals due to the growth of social media and the availability of information on the Internet. It was also agreed that successful sustainability communication must be tailored to different circumstances and contexts. Presenters included **Kim Essex**, Senior Vice President, Director, North American Food Practice, Ketchum; **Charlie Arnot**, Chief Executive Officer, Center for Food Integrity; and **Daniel Meyer**, Roundtable for Responsible Soy.



When it comes to deploying effective sustainability tools, the break-

{ PLANET, PEOPLE, ANIMALS & PROGRESS }

Conference Highlights (cont)

Definition Evolution

GRSB's **Principles and Criteria Working Group**

Leaders discussed in detail the five principle areas of defining sustainable beef on a global basis.

Following nearly 18 months of work, including a public comment period after which revisions were made to the document, the working groups presented the finished product to the GRSB membership which approved the definition with a 96% majority. Leaders presenting at the conference included **Ruaraidh Petre**, GRSB Executive Director; **Fawn Jackson**, Canadian Cattlemen's Association; **Ed Delate**, Key-stone Foods; **Nicole Johnson-Hoffman**, Cargill; **Michele Banik-Rake**, McDonald's; and **Ian McConnel**, WWF-Australia.



Technical working group chairs

A Monometric Concept?

Dr. Marty Matlock, Executive Director, Office of Sustainability; Professor, Biological and Agricultural Engineering, University of Arkansas, discussing the science of sustainability and making the point that it is not a "monometric" concept. Dr. Matlock reiterated that, in order to develop meaningful key performance indicators, it is important that you identify what you must do, identify what you know you can do, and identify what you think you can do.



Matlock



Bastos

Progress in Brazil

In a most enlightening panel, GTPS President, **Eduardo Bastos**, led a discussion including panelists from several segments of the Brazilian beef value chain during which the work of GTPS was showcased. Mr. Bastos indicated progress has been possible due to the active participation of the many industry segments and the public. Working in a collaborative fashion, GTPS has led the development of constructive projects that demonstrate the value of incorporating more sustainable practices.

Breakout Sessions (cont)

out presenters used examples from other commodities as well, identifying specific tools that are available to measure sustainability. Presenters **Dawn Robinson**, Regional Director: Latin American, Proforest; **Tre' Cates**, Chief Operating Officer/CFO, Savory Institute; and **Karl Williams**, Director, FAI Farms, shared their experience and expertise in identifying specific sustainability measures. Some of the measures discussed included scorecards, good practice guidelines, communication and disclosure, self-assessment tools, verification and independent certification.



How much is enough?

Jose Roberto Peres, Cattle Unit Director, Elanco – Brasil, shared a compelling presentation on research being done by his company on the issue of global food security. He focused on the importance of meat in diets commenting that, "when diets are supplemented with meat or milk, learning and test scores improve; quality of nutrients versus just quantity of calories matter." He further commented that due to population growth and income growth, "by 2050, we will need 43% more beef."



Conference Highlights (cont)

More With Less

Dr. Frank Mitloehner, Former Chair, FAO's Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance Partnership, and professor at the University of California-Davis, addressed the topic of sustainable intensification and how to satisfy the growing global demand for animal protein without depleting natural resources. Dr. Mitloehner commented that in 1970, the US had 140 million head of beef cattle and by comparison, today there are 90 million head; however in both 1970 and 2010, 24 million tons of beef were produced, thus suggesting intensification can be a sustainable solution to produce more with less.

Regional Approaches

During the final session of the Global Conference, regional updates were provided from key beef producing areas on progress toward developing roundtables to advance beef sustainability. Speaking during this session were **Cheryl Copithorne-Barnes**, Chair, Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef; **Brian Lindsay**, Project Leader, Beef Working Group, SAI Platform (European Union); **Terry Meikle**, Regional Manager North America, Beef + Lamb New Zealand; **Forrest Roberts**, Chief Executive Officer, National Cattlemen's Beef Association (USA); **Jose Benito Guerrero**, The Nature Conservancy, Belem (Mexico); and **Jaun Fernando Gallego Beltran** (Colombia).

The Producer View

So what is sustainable beef from a producer's point of view? Producers from Uruguay, the United States and Brazil shared their **views on sustainable production methods**. From intensification of cattle feeding to forage management, the producers identified specific steps they have taken to become more sustainable. Speaking were **Gonzalo Becoña**, Agronomist, Plan Agropecuario; **Tom McDonald**, Vice President of Environmental Affairs, JBS Five Rivers Cattle Feeding; and **Andre Bartocci**, Manager, Nossa Senhora das Gracas Farm.

The Commercial View

Providing a masterful capstone to the Global Conference was **Francesca DeBiase**, Vice President for Strategic Sourcing & Sustainability, Worldwide Supply Chain, McDonald's. Ms. DeBiase made the point that, "we're only as good as our customers think we are" and it is imperative that we continue to realize everyone must demonstrate a shared commitment. She emphasized that we must tell the entire beef story by working together.

Local Relevance, Global Impact

In summarizing the Global Conference, GRSB President, **Cameron Bruett**, reiterated that the work of GRSB will continue to be "on the ground empowerment" and not "command and control" in working toward greater sustainability in the global beef industry. Bruett stressed that our collective goal must be to find local solutions with global impact. He thanked the many efforts of the GRSB Executive Board, Executive Committee, Planning Committee and Staff for developing an outstanding conference and gave special appreciation to the many sponsors of the conference who, without their support, the conference could not have succeeded.



Becoña, McDonald and Bartocci



DeBiase



Scott Stuart, Ruairaidh Petre and GRSB Executive Board members

Presentations available by clicking **highlighted text** throughout this document.

To view the entire conference, please visit:

www.grsbeef.org/Conference-Proceedings

