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Regional Sustainability Workshops  
**SUMMARY REPORT ON 2013 WORKSHOPS**  
Innovating for More Sustainable Beef



## Regional Sustainability Workshops: Summary Report on 2013 Workshops

# Innovating for More Sustainable Beef

**Introduction:** Combining field tours, presentations, expert panels, and discussion, three workshops in 2013 brought participants to Montana, Texas and Nebraska. The workshops were jointly convened and planned by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), a contractor to the Beef Checkoff. The workshops were funded through the Beef Checkoff, McDonald's, the Packard Foundation, Sam's Club, Walmart, and the Walmart Foundation. The Keystone Center provided independent facilitation and prepared this summary report.

The workshop dates and locations were as follows:

- Billings, Montana, May 21-23, 2013
- Lubbock, Texas, June 5-7, 2013
- Omaha and Sandhills Region, Nebraska, September 16-18, 2013

**Purpose:** The workshops brought together a diverse supply chain audience and engaged participants in joint dialogue and information-sharing about sustainability efforts happening today, how ranchers and companies throughout the supply chain view sustainability, and the challenges and needs of upstream producers and downstream users. The workshops were designed to foster relationships and collaboration, create understanding of perspectives and challenges, and discuss potential opportunities for the future... all with the vision of understanding and promoting sustainability.

**Objectives:** The workshops provided an opportunity to:

1. Educate key supply-chain participants about current on-the-ground sustainability efforts, including multi-stakeholder initiatives.
2. Foster relationships and greater collaboration across the supply chain.
3. Provide participants the opportunity to see innovations in sustainability.
4. Create an understanding of the challenges facing farmers and ranchers and the importance of involving them in broader sustainability discussions.

**Participants:** The three workshops brought together a total of 118 participants from 74 different stakeholder organizations and businesses representing a variety of sectors, including producers, packagers and processors, restaurant and retail, and conservation partners. A summary participant list is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

**Workshop Agenda Overview:** Each workshop occurred over the course of three days. The general schedule for each workshop included:

- Day 1 - Evening: Introduction to sustainability trends and issues
- Day 2 - Full Day: Field tour, local collaboration panel
- Day 3 - Morning: Supply chain perspectives panel and participant discussion



**Overview of Workshop Presentation and Discussion Themes:** This report highlights and synthesizes presentation and discussion themes across all three workshops. More detailed information about the presentations and discussions that occurred at each workshop can be found in the individual workshop reports.

### ➤ **Sustainability Trends and Issues**

Each workshop provided presentations on the *Global Roundtable on Sustainable Beef's (GRSB) Key Issues Framework* and on the *Beef Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) conducted by the Beef Checkoff*. Both efforts emphasize continuous improvement and utilize sustainability definitions that focus on environmental, economic, and social issues related to beef production.

GRSB is a global, multi-stakeholder initiative developed to advance continuous improvement in sustainability of the global beef value chain through leadership, science and multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration. As an initial step, the GRSB has developed the Key Issues Framework, which identifies key issues including energy, air, soil, animal care, community, people, labor and business, nutrition and safety, and water.

The Beef LCA considers both pre-harvest and post-harvest operations and generates an industry "fingerprint" for sustainability indicators including resource consumption, land use, energy consumption, emissions, toxicity potential, and occupational illnesses and accidents. Preliminary results of the study show improvements in many components of the beef industry's environmental footprint over time.

When asked about their own definitions of sustainability and key issues related to sustainability, participants similarly emphasized economic, environmental, and social sustainability. Participants noted that the balance of importance of these is different for different stakeholders, that different audiences have different definitions for sustainability, and that there are different concerns for different sectors. Continuation of operations over time, improvement over time, efficiency, and doing more with less were often mentioned as definitions for sustainability. Key sustainability issues frequently cited included generational transfer, animal welfare, carbon, waste, livelihoods and profitability, product value and quality, natural resource use, water, and soil and grassland health.

### ➤ **Field Tours**

Participants toured a variety of sites representing the cow-calf, feed lot, and packing and processing segments of the beef supply chain. Each of the three workshops visited a different mix of field sites. At each site, field tour hosts described innovations that are being employed for sustainability, as well as key issues, challenges and opportunities. The table on the next pages summarizes by segment the field tour sites visited and the innovations highlighted at each site.



## Overview by Segment of Innovations Highlighted at Regional Beef Sustainability Workshop Field Tour Sites

Segment	Sites Visited	Innovations, Challenges, and Opportunities
<b>Cow-Calf</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Montana:</b> Hartman Barn, Matador Grassbank, Robinson’s Beauchamp Pasture</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Texas:</b> 6666 Ranch</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Nebraska:</b> Wagonhammer Ranch</p>	<p>Innovations highlighted at ranch visits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rotational grazing and intensive grazing management</li> <li>• Wildlife-friendly fencing and bird ramps</li> <li>• Cross-fencing</li> <li>• Underground water lines</li> <li>• A grassbank program enabling ranchers to pay discounted fees to graze cattle in exchange for wildlife-friendly practices on their own operations</li> <li>• Low-stress cattle handling practices</li> <li>• Fire breaks</li> <li>• Brush clearing and noxious weed control</li> <li>• Utilizing genetics and artificial insemination in breeding</li> <li>• Increasing biodiversity and quail habitat and conducting quail monitoring</li> <li>• Leasing other ranches during drought</li> <li>• Rotating cows to different pastures through-out their lives</li> <li>• Diversifying operations to mitigate financial impacts of drought</li> <li>• Use of vaccinations and other animal health technologies</li> <li>• Electronic recordkeeping to monitor grassland management and cattle grazing</li> </ul> <p>Ranch visits emphasized the importance of grasslands for both cattle and wildlife and the importance of taking care of the grasslands in order to have sustainable operations. Challenges and opportunities discussed at the ranches include generational transfer and the desire and ability of younger generation to continue ranching, finding labor, drought, wildfire, termites, mesquite and cedar brush, dealing with various land management agencies and levels of bureaucracies, demand for product, and legislation that can yield unintended consequences. Ranchers also highlighted the value of cost share opportunities, partnership with local land grant universities, peer-to-peer learning, the importance of communicating ranchers’ environmental efforts to a broader audience, and opportunities for diversification to promote economic sustainability.</p>



Segment	Sites Visited	Innovations, Challenges, and Opportunities
Feed Lot	<p><b>Texas:</b> Hale Center Feedyard</p> <p><b>Nebraska:</b> Herb Albers Feed Lot, Inc.; US Meat Animal Research Center (MARC)</p>	<p>Innovations highlighted at the feed lots include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pen design that is designed to drain excess water</li> <li>• Water recycling programs, rainwater settling lagoons to catch runoff and treat effluent to meet water quality standards, and groundwater monitoring</li> <li>• Feed trucks fitted with GPS technology to ensure that they are in the right location at the right time with the correct ration of feed</li> <li>• Centrally controlled and computerized sprinkler systems that control dust and keep cattle cool</li> <li>• Introduced wasps that eat fly larvae</li> <li>• A variety of feed (food stuffs), including distillers grains, that efficiently grow cattle weight</li> <li>• Manure composting that reduces waste, provides extra revenue, and fertilizes feed crops</li> <li>• Beta agonist supplements that allow for greater retention of protein and greater feed efficiency</li> <li>• Computerized information and record keeping to track cattle feed intake and health</li> <li>• Constant flow water tanks</li> <li>• High tensile fencing for cattle comfort</li> <li>• Research (at MARC) to understand feed conversion and efficiency</li> </ul> <p>Tours of feed lots also emphasized the role of generational succession in the sustainability of the lots, the positive role of the feed lots in the community, and the family atmosphere among the staff. Sustainability challenges that were noted include keeping a good customer base given the low herd size in the U.S., lack of predictability in corn prices, the loss of capacity for packing plants in the U.S., and social acceptance of feedlots. The importance of transparency was also emphasized.</p>
Packing Plant	<p><b>Nebraska:</b> Tyson’s Dakota City Packing Plant</p>	<p>Sustainability innovations that were highlighted at the packing plant include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency in design</li> <li>• Plant-specific water treatment and infrastructure to enable water recycling and allow leveraging thermal value (energy) derived from water heating and cooling processes</li> <li>• Biogas reuse</li> <li>• Promotion of ergonomics for worker safety</li> <li>• Innovations for animal well-being</li> <li>• Waste reduction and product/bi-product recovery (e.g., the use of hair from the tanning process as fertilizer, and the use of other bi-products for animal feed, gelatin, and edible and non-edible plants)</li> <li>• Right-size packaging</li> <li>• Replacement of certain hide tanning chemicals with lower-nitrogen chemicals.</li> </ul>





## ➤ Innovations in Collaboration

Each workshop featured examples of local collaboration initiatives, with presentations emphasizing how collaboration has advanced sustainability and the lessons learned. Initiatives that were profiled include:

***The Ranchers Stewardship Alliance (Montana)***, a collaboration of ranching families in northern Montana. Its mission is to promote the ecological, social and economic conditions that will sustain the biodiversity and integrity of the America's northern mixed-grass prairie for present and future generations. Members of the Alliance emphasized the importance of county schools, collaboration to promote economics of scale and to assist each other during calving and branding seasons, peer-to-peer learning among neighbors and providing institutional knowledge through the Alliance, and partnership with The Nature Conservancy through the Matador Grassbank. Members of the Alliance also emphasized the importance of generational transfer.

***The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) (Texas)***, a collaboration among ranchers, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and many other farming, ranching and wildlife organizations across Texas. GLCI's objectives are to: 1) Identify priority issues facing ranchers and landowners, find solutions, and effect change on privately owned grazing lands, 2) Promote voluntary, landowner-supported efforts to protect and improve America's privately owned grazing lands and, 3) Strengthen land stewardship partnerships between grazing land managers and other groups. In many instances GLCI is using GPS technology to help farmers and ranchers conduct a variety of detailed resource inventories and monitoring projects.

***The Sandhills Task Force (Nebraska)***, which brings together ranchers and wildlife experts to enhance the sandhill wetland-grassland ecosystem in a way that sustains profitable private ranching, wildlife and vegetative diversity, and associated water supplies. The Task Force provides funding for projects, typically on a cost-share basis; projects include conservation easements, cross fencing, invasive species removal, and projects to keep wetlands intact by modifying or blocking drainage structures.

***The Switzer Ranch, Calamus Outfitters, and Gracie Creek Landowners Association (Nebraska)***, which provide ecotourism experiences including hunting, float trips, jeep tours, and bird watching and benefit from collaboration with partners like World Wildlife Fund, Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Nebraska Game & Parks Commission. The Gracie Creek Landowners Association is a partnership of neighboring ranches that has sought to "employ conservation" and has focused on projects related to focal species, range monitoring, management practices, and community education.



## ➤ Supply Chain Perspectives

Each workshop featured a panel that brought together stakeholder perspectives from ranching, cattle feeding, packaging and processing, food production, and restaurant and retail segments of the supply chain as well as from the conservation community. Each panel began with brief remarks from the panelists in response to the questions: How do you define sustainability? What are the needs and challenges you encounter? What innovations and opportunities are you most excited about?

Over the course of the three workshops, panelists included individuals from the following organizations:

- **Cow-Calf Ranches:** I X Ranch (MT), Padlock Ranch (MT), Persimmon Gap Ranch (TX), Shovel Dot Ranch (NE)
- **Feed Lots:** Alexander Cattle and Farms (NE), JBS Five Rivers Cattle Feeding
- **Packaging, Processing, and Food Companies:** Cargill, ConAgra
- **Restaurants and Retail:** Darden Restaurants, McDonald's USA, Walmart Stores, Inc.
- **Conservation Organizations and Extension:** Audubon, Montana State University, The Nature Conservancy

Panelist comments and the question and answer discussions with participants emphasized the following themes:

- Environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability
- The complementary relationship between grassland health, natural resource management, ranching, and wildlife
- The importance of collaboration within the supply chain and with conservation and university partners
- The need for continuous improvement across all current performance levels, the importance of producer education, training and technical assistance, and the role of universities, NGOs, industry, and peer-to-peer learning in providing these opportunities
- The need for a standard definition of sustainable beef, the need for common indicators and metrics, and the role of standards and certifications
- The challenge of generational transfer, the affordability challenges of breaking into ranching and opportunities to engage young ranchers, trends in land ownership, and the role of consolidation/increasing operation size in providing economies of scale
- The importance, challenges, and opportunities associated with communicating the beef sustainability story to consumers, including issues such as misinformation from media and others outside the industry, the risks of green-washing, the need to communicate with a unified industry voice, the need for transparency, and the need for responsiveness to the expectations and changing needs of consumers
- Opportunities associated with reducing waste, including water recycling, manure reuse, methane capture and reuse, utilization of byproducts, and reduction of food waste
- The challenge of feeding a growing population and the need for productivity and efficiency



## ➤ Looking to the Future

Each workshop concluded with presentations and/or participants reflections on workshop experiences as well as future opportunities. These discussions placed emphasis on cross-sector communication, collaboration and dialogue; the development of a shared definition of sustainability; transparency and credible communication to the consumer to tell the beef sustainability story; continuous improvement; accountability, long-term thinking, pre-competitive and proactive approaches; flexibility in different contexts, the complex issues related to generational transfer; and opportunities for education and utilization of innovative practices and technologies. Participants also emphasized the need to take learnings and perspectives back to their respective organizations, to have internal and external audiences visit the various sectors within the supply chain to better understand the challenges and opportunities, and to develop future opportunities for dialogue.

**Conclusion:** The three regional beef sustainability workshops were unique in the diverse participants they brought together, the first-hand field experiences they provided, and the robust exchange of information, ideas, and perspectives that they fostered. Throughout the workshops, both formal and informal conversations on sustainability occurred at field tour sites, during presentations and panels, over meals, and on the bus. Through these conversations, a new level of understanding was created among participants. Consistent with the purpose and objectives of the workshops, each workshop successfully educated key supply-chain participants about current on-the-ground sustainability efforts, including multi-stakeholder initiatives, fostered relationships and greater collaboration across the supply chain, provided participants the opportunity to see innovations in sustainability, and created an understanding of the challenges facing farmers and ranchers and the importance of involving them in broader sustainability discussions. The workshops themselves represented an innovative, collaborative approach to beginning to identify and address common ground and opportunities for exploration and promotion of beef sustainability.





## Appendix 1: Participant List, Sustainable Beef Workshops, 2013

<b>2013 Regional Sustainability Workshops: Participants</b>			
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
J.D.	Alexander	Alexander Cattle & Farms	Nebraska
Larry	Allen	Malpai Borderlands Group	Texas
Leo	Barthelmess	Ranchers Stewardship Alliance	Montana
Emery	Birdwell	Birdwell & Clark Ranch	Texas
Karin	Bogaers	Ahold USA	Nebraska
Pete	Bonds	Bonds Ranch	Texas
Ann Marie	Bosshamer	Nebraska Beef Council	Nebraska
Melissa	Brewer	Certified Angus Beef LLC	Nebraska
J.K. "Rooter"	Brite, Jr.	JA Ranch	Texas
Kristen	Brown	Kristen Brown Communications (for National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a Contractor to the Beef Checkoff)	Montana, Texas, Nebraska
Cameron	Bruett	JBS USA, LLC	Montana, Nebraska
Homer	Buell	Shovel Dot Ranch	Nebraska
Pat	Burt	Hitch Enterprises, Inc.	Texas
Bill	Bush	Wendy's Quality Supply Chain Co-Op	Nebraska
Rob	Cannell	McDonald's Corporation	Montana
Jude	Capper	Livestock Sustainability Consulting	Montana
Lauren	Chase	Montana Stockgrowers Association	Montana
Julie	Collins	Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center at Cedar Hill	Texas
Rickette	Collins	McDonald's Corporation	Nebraska
Brian	Covington	Keystone Foods	Texas



<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
Ed	Delate	Keystone Foods	Nebraska
Kim	Dirks	Tyson Foods, Inc.	Texas, Nebraska
Bill	Donald	Cayuse Livestock Co	Montana
Jessica	Droste Yagan	McDonald's USA	Texas
Glenn	Duff	Montana State University	Montana
Mark	Eastham	Walmart	Nebraska
Mike	Engler	Cactus Feeders	Texas
Lill	Erickson	Western Sustainability Exchange	Montana
Wayne	Fahsholtz	Padlock Ranch Co.	Montana
Jim	Faulstich	South Dakota Grassland Coalition	Nebraska
Joyce	Fong	Cargill McDonald's Business Unit	Montana
Brittni	Furrow	Walmart	Nebraska
Jerry	Glaser	Jerry Glaser, Inc.	Nebraska
John	Grande	Grande Ranch Co.	Montana
Hal	Hamilton	Sustainable Food Lab	Texas
Keith	Hansen	Nutrition Service Associates	Texas
Chaley	Harney	Montana Beef Council	Montana
Kristen	Hassebrook	Nebraska Cattlemen	Nebraska
Michael	Hillyer	Walmart Stores	Montana
Tucker	Hughes	Montana Stockgrowers Association	Montana
Justin "Judge"	Jessop	South Dakota Grassland Coalition	Nebraska
Dennis	Jorgensen	World Wildlife Fund	Montana
James	Joshua	McDonald's Corporation	Montana
Ken	Kimble	Costco Wholesale	Nebraska



<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
Bo	Kizziar	Hansford County Feeders, LP	Texas
Nancy	Labbe	World Wildlife Fund	Montana, Texas, Nebraska
Marian	Langan	Audubon Nebraska	Nebraska
Bob	Lee	Robert E. Lee Ranch Co	Montana
Marko	Manoukian	Montana State University Phillips County Extension	Montana
Michael	Martin	Cargill, Inc.	Nebraska
Misty	Martin	Texas Beef Council	Texas
Brian	Martin	The Nature Conservancy	Montana
Ray	Marxer	Montana Stockgrowers Association	Montana
Carl	Mattson	Montana Stockgrowers Association	Montana
Molly	McAdams	Om <sup>3</sup>	Texas
Suzanne	McCarty	Cargill	Montana
Pete	McClymont	Nebraska Cattlemen	Nebraska
Tom	McDonald	JBS Five Rivers Cattle Feeding	Texas
Sean	McMahon	The Nature Conservancy	Montana
Mike	Miller	National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff	Montana, Texas
Bill	Milton	Milton Ranch and Country Natural Beef Cooperative	Montana
Ronny	Morgan	Morgan Ranch, Inc.	Nebraska
Kay	Morgan	Morgan Ranch, Inc.	Nebraska
Mike	Morris	Yum! Brands	Nebraska
Jeff	Mosley	Montana State University Extension	Montana
Meghan	Mueseler	Cargill	Nebraska



<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
Jeff	Nelson	World Wildlife Fund, Northern Great Plains Program	Montana
LeRoy	Ness	South Dakota Grassland Coalition	Nebraska
Joan	Neumiller	Thunder Basin Grasslands Prairie Ecosystem Association	Montana
Vicki	Olson	Ranchers Stewardship Alliance	Montana
Ben	Oppliger	Oppliger Feedyard, Inc.	Texas
Darin	Paine	The Nature Conservancy	Montana
Laura	Paulson	The Nature Conservancy	Texas
Dean	Peterson	Rancher	Montana
David	Petty	Iowa River Ranch	Nebraska
Gary	Price	77 Ranch	Texas
Elizabeth	Reaves	Sustainable Food Lab	Nebraska
Tom	Revier	Revier Cattle Company	Nebraska
Errol	Rice	Montana Stockgrowers Association	Montana
Nikki	Richardson	National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff	Nebraska
Bill	Rishel	Rishel Angus	Nebraska
John	Robinson	National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff	Nebraska
Clyde	Robinson	Ranchers Stewardship Alliance	Montana
Steve	Roth	I X RANCH	Montana
Joan	Ruskamp	J & S Feedlot	Nebraska
Itzia	Sandoval	Commission for Environmental Cooperation	Montana
John	Schaller	Lopez Foods	Texas
Joe	Schechinger	Wendy's Quality Supply Chain Coop	Nebraska



<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
Donald	Seibert	Montana Audubon	Montana
Tom	Sherman	Costco Wholesale	Nebraska
Martha	Skelley	Quivira Coalition	Texas
Jason	Skold	The Nature Conservancy	Nebraska
Season	Solorio	National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff	Montana, Texas, Nebraska
Sarah	Sortum	Switzer Ranch	Nebraska
Ron	Sosebee	Texas Tech University	Texas
Kim	Stackhouse	National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff	Montana, Texas, Nebraska
Ryan	Stackhouse	Walmart Stores, Inc.	Texas
Alisha	Staggs	Environmental Defense Fund	Montana
Jim	Steinbeisser	National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff, and Montana Stockgrowers Association	Montana
Steven	Stokke	Revier Cattle Company	Nebraska
Bruce	Switzer	Switzer Ranch	Nebraska
Gail	Tavill	ConAgra Foods	Nebraska
Mike	Thies	Panera Bread	Montana
Bill	Thoni	Cargill Beef	Texas
Brandon	Tidwell	Darden Restaurants	Nebraska
Craig	Uden	Darr Feedlot	Nebraska
Dale	Veseth	Ranchers Stewardship Alliance	Montana
Bud	Walsh	Ranchers Stewardship Alliance	Montana
Bryan	Weech	World Wildlife Fund	Texas, Nebraska
Buck	Wehrbein	Mead Cattle Co., LLC	Nebraska





<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
Ben	Weinheimer	Texas Cattle Feeders Association	Texas
John	Welch	Spade Ranches	Texas
Eldon	White	Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Assn.	Texas
Kyle	Williams	Lubbock Feeders, LP	Texas
Ross	Wilson	Texas Cattle Feeders Association	Texas
Jaclyn	Wilson	Wilson Ranch	Nebraska
Russell	Woodward	Texas Beef Council	Texas

#### **Facilitators and Support Staff**

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
Liz	Elegant	Ketchum	Montana, Texas
Paige	Graham	Ketchum	Montana, Nebraska
Suzan	Klein	The Keystone Center	Montana
Matthew	Mulica	The Keystone Center	Texas
Julie	Shapiro	The Keystone Center	Montana, Texas, Nebraska