



VBP+ AND PROTECTING OUR ABILITY TO FARM

New modules, social license will anchor progress

On most journeys it is not uncommon to have questions arise after the trip has started. Did we pick the right vehicle? The best route? Who's driving? Are we going fast enough? Will we meet our destination deadlines? And how do we keep everyone engaged in the process?

So it is with the journey to the next generation of Verified Beef Production (VBP).

VBP+ is a plan to anchor Canada's beef industry goals to be a global leader. It is one part of a grassroots initiative on sustainability and brand enhancement.

Producers have long understood the value of combining animal care, environmental stewardship and biosecurity with food safety, says Terry Grajczyk, national VBP manager.

"These practices are inter-related and have the same outcome, defining responsible practices and getting credit for what they do."

As this journey has unfolded, it is not unusual for producers to have questions basically asking "Tell me again why we are doing this?" she says.

The drivers. The initiative to add to VBP came about as a result of a growing interest by consumers to understand what goes into the food they eat. It's about protecting the social license to continue production.

There are specific reasons Canada was chosen to be a sustainability pilot by McDonald's, and why there is growing interest by others in this process. They include the ability to leverage programs such as VBP, BIXS and RFID capability.

The vehicle. Is this the right vehicle? VBP was chosen by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association as the anchor program because



VBP+ is designed to help protect the right to farm for future generations.

of its ease of use for producers of all sizes across the country. It can build with other existing producer alliances with similar goals.

Speed. Are we moving fast enough?

There are a lot of players to bring together, and in many ways this is uncharted territory. Module development is on track and will be ready for April 1, 2016. The final outcome is dependent on inter-laying with the work of the Canadian Roundtable on Sustainable Beef (CSRB).

The destination. Will we get to the destination we've chosen?

Like any journey of this scale, what comes out of it depends on what is put into it. The VBP+ program is ultimately designed to meet needs of producers and our food partners.

Being proactive, working with all stakeholders and carving out a workable program are basic tenants. Stakeholders see this as an opportunity to explain what customers want.

Industry can determine its future without government driving regulations or end-users asking for a proliferation of programs.

Keeping everyone engaged. This is a base program for others to build upon. The industry is working with provincial cattle organizations for credible, affordable solutions without bureaucracy. VBP participants have indicated that looking inside their operation can be a good thing.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

VBP+ is focused on creating a culture of leading by example, says Grajczyk. Success is certainly accomplishable. Many aspects of VBP+ are low-cost or no cost, and with the new program offers a menu of choices.

Leadership simply means being aware of what can be done, doing what's right, and helping those who don't know to pull up their socks when they need to.

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