



A NEW GENERATION OF VBP

New environmental stewardship, biosecurity and animal care modules to be added

Canadian beef producers are taking a new step to sustainability in their industry. With more customers asking for more assurances of sustainable production practices, the Verified Beef Production (VBP) program is growing. It will anchor a new generation of beef production.

Ag Canada Growing Forward 2 AgriMarketing funds will help add three new VBP modules — environmental stewardship, biosecurity and animal care. This suite of modules established on a common platform will help meet marketplace and societal expectations.

Canadian beef producers understand the importance of producing food in a sustainable manner. They've helped Canada build a reputation for wholesomeness, says Terry Grajczyk, national manager for VBP. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association continues to look at ways producers can secure further recognition and reward for credible production practices.

"A national suite of VBP modules will provide proof of practices and help differentiate Canadian beef," says Grajczyk.

"It will promote acceptable beef production practices and demonstrate Canada's beef industry commitment to responsible production. That will help define Canada's beef story with positive benefits that can match or exceed competing countries."

INDUSTRY DRIVES DEVELOPMENT

Producers will no doubt have questions about what all of this means for them and their industry, says Grajczyk.



VBP is looking to add options with on-farm practicality in the forefront.

These new developments will occur in a way that ensures the founding principles of VBP are protected and enhanced, she says. That includes being practical, voluntary, credible and designed to fit an ISO-based management system.

Each of the three new modules will be developed following a specific framework and development approach. Those steps include:

- Risk analysis with stakeholders and producers.
- Communication with key stakeholders.
- Finalization of producer-oriented chapters for each module.
- Producer education materials and support.
- Third party conformance assessment option via on-farm pilots.
- Full implementation plan for approval by CCA and provincial members.

Finally, implementation of modules will

be staggered. As with the current VBP, it will be designed nationally but implemented provincially by industry.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Identifying practical, industry sanctioned practices to manage production factors at the farm level is important.

Some markets are identifying elements such as animal care and environmental stewardship as important to customers. Biosecurity is important to maintain the health of each individual herd and ultimately, for the industry as a whole.

"This project will incorporate a risk assessment approach to identify key practices, education and awareness tools," says Grajczyk. "Existing materials such as the national biosecurity standard, environmental farm plans and other materials will be used wherever appropriate."

OTHER SECTORS FOLLOWING SUIT

The beef industry is not alone in making these changes, says Grajczyk. Other livestock sectors are already taking similar steps to address societal expectations. This will assist the beef industry to also do this in a feasible, staged approach.

"We work with the dairy sector because we both raise cattle to produce food. And we participate in various national and international developments to ensure we are on track. Thanks to federal government support, we can work with partners to provide options for the industry," she says.