



UPDATE ON NEW VBP+ MODULES

There's progress. Here's what producers should know

The Verified Beef Production (VBP) program, known in Canada for on-farm food safety, is adding new modules for biosecurity, animal care and environment. It's an ambitious development for the program and potentially significant for the national beef industry.

These new plans and related development around sustainability have producers regularly wondering about the purpose and progress of this effort.

Manitoba cattle producer Betty Green has watched the developments of the new modules from both inside and outside the program. As a producer she knows these will affect her own ranching operation in Manitoba's Interlake region. As VBP coordinator for her province and a program representative on the national VBP+ effort, she knows the questions producers and industry players are asking.

Here's a recap of key things she believes producers should know.

There's a purpose for doing this. Market expectations domestically and globally are asking for transparency and accountability. Adding new modules can help accomplish that, she believes. "And a co-ordinated industry effort also works to avoid unnecessary and costly duplication of the services needed in the beef marketplace."

Other groups are working to leverage this effort. The Canadian Cattlemen's



Producers like Betty Green of Fisher Branch, Man. are instrumental to adding practical and flexible modules to add to VBP.

Association has spearheaded the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable beef. This VBP+ program is a platform for this initiative.

Even more important a number of leading companies such as McDonald's and Loblaws are looking for ways to leverage the VBP+ effort in their own branded products. Others are also expressing interest.

"As a result the work on VBP+ has potential to pay off in many ways," says Green.

It's a combination of old and new. There are new aspects to this new era of sustainability but the bulk of this is built on tried and true practices well established over time, says Green.

"It's really important that producers understand VBP+ has been built around the goal of not reinventing the wheel. The goal is a program that is easy to use. We are using generic risk assessments to identify priorities. And we are using existing programs such as animal care codes and Environmental Farm Plans.

"This is designed to build on established efforts such as Ontario's Corn-Fed brand."

We're making good progress. The VBP+ initiative is being overseen by an extensive industry-led group designed to realistically meet producer and industry needs.

The business plan for the new VBP is being developed. Modules have been tested on-farm and will be available in 2016.

INDUSTRY PRIDE

"There is a lot of hard work yet to be done to get all of this implemented seamlessly," says Green. However, she believes producers would be pleased with what has been accomplished in the VBP+ process.

"It would be very rewarding if all producers could have a chance to hear first-hand the complimentary comments about producers from the players around the table during in these meetings.

"There is strong support for how beef producers manage their farms and ranches today. And there is real confidence in VBP to work with partners to meet market expectations."