

Kansas Corn Supports Marketing Initiatives

Kansas Corn Supports Marketing Initiatives to Sell Pork to Global Consumers *Strategy to Increase Japanese Pork Sales Implemented by USMEF*

A new overseas marketing effort is adding value to American pork.

The U.S. Meat Export Federation is implementing a strategy in Japan to promote branded and thick-cut pork products. The Kansas Corn Commission has been a long-standing supporter of USMEF initiatives, and believes this effort can increase sales of American pork as a high-end niche market to the Japanese consumer.

In the first eight months of 2012, Japan purchased 307,442 metric tons (677.8 million pounds) of U.S. pork valued at more than \$1.3 billion, an increase of six-percent in value on six-percent lower volumes compared to 2011. Kansas is the number ten state in hog and pig inventory and produces about 2.7-percent of the nation's total swine.

Competition in Japan's branded pork market is intense with more than 400 domestic brands competing for consumer attention. Earlier this year, USMEF conducted an American Branded Pork Campaign to encourage consumers to purchase branded U.S. pork in supermarkets and restaurants.

The USMEF marketing effort brought together representatives from eight national Japanese newspaper outlets for presentations by leading Japanese meat processor Hannan Foods Group as well as the ANA Intercontinental Hotel Tokyo, a regular user of branded U.S. pork.

"These activities increase awareness of the quality and value of pork products to consumers in Japan," said Kansas Corn Commissioner Pat Ross, Lawrence. Ross raises grain and livestock on his family farm. "The work that USMEF does to build export markets for pork and beef are important to me as a corn producer and as a livestock producer."

A recent consumer survey showed more than 80-percent of Japanese consumers eat pork more than once each week and 90-percent are familiar with branded pork products in Japan. The survey also showed that only about 30-percent of consumers purchase branded pork regularly, with a third of that group only buying the product for special occasions due to the higher price it commands.

To introduce consumers to cooking techniques that work for larger pork cuts, USMEF-Japan hired popular cooking instructor Rika Yukimasa to develop U.S. pork recipes - including some for microwave cooking - that will be introduced during a two-month promotion that runs through the end of 2012.

For the current promotion, Yukimasa demonstrated "easy cooking roast pork" recipes for a group of 160 food bloggers and homemakers to help develop word-of-mouth awareness. The recipes will be featured in this week's issue of ESSE magazine in addition to retail point-of-purchase recipes and labeling.

Funding for the thick-cut pork initiatives is provided through the USDA Market Access Program (MAP) and the Pork Checkoff, a national program supported by producers when pigs are sold and

when products are brought into the United States.

The Kansas Corn Commission has been a supporter of USMEF since the late 1970s. Specifically, the state's corn checkoff program funds USMEF activities and information because of its partnership with the cattle and pork feeding industry. There are currently 1,500 hog farms in Kansas. Of these, 310 farms produce 95-percent of the state's pork. Kansas produces more than 500 million pounds of pork each year, which helps feed millions of people in the U.S. and abroad through exports.