

Meat Identification Program Underway

The bedrock has been laid for paving a national road to common meat identification programs to help consumers at the retail meat counter, according to a spokesman for the National Live Stock and Meat Board.

Meat Board president David H. Stroud labeled the project as "... an appropriate response to current issues embodied in the 'consumer's right to know' what he or she is buying and its value or worth in comparison to other purchases at the meat counter. And we think it will be good for business, too," he added.

The statements followed the first meeting of an Industrywide Cooperative Meat Identification Standards ad hoc Committee June 8 in Chicago. About 25 executives and others representing retail and meat packing-processing companies and-or their industry trade

organizations met at the Meat Board's request. The ad hoc group discussed the merits of proposals for a nationally adoptable retail meat nomenclature and identification standard.

Meat Board Merchandising Director H. Kenneth Johnson, said a working draft of a meat nomenclature manual and "master list of retail meat names" was presented to committee members and was accepted as the foundation of a future manual for the meat trade. In substance, the workbook discussed the outlook for state regulation, generic names, bone-in and boneless cuts, 'fanciful' names, meat cookery in relation to tenderness and general consumer confusion at the meat counter.

"Several important points were nailed down," Johnson noted, "which would seem ob-

vious to some persons, but have not generally been widely recognized or understood by all of us in industry."

Among the items confirmed were:

1. That many, if not most, consumers are confused by the variety of names by which meat cuts are known across the country, differing even in stores across the street from each other;

2. That there is widespread lack of specific consumer information at the store level of the variety of fresh meat products — particularly how to identify and prepare them — resulting in further shopper confusion, although this information is available to industry;

3. That it is in the combined consumers' and industry's interest to move with all deliberate speed to develop a nationally common system for retail meat

cut identification which would enable any person in any store in the country to know and have confidence in the kind and type of fresh meat cut he or she was looking at in a retail meat counter.

4. That to fail to develop and enact such a system would invite local government efforts to solve consumers' problems at the meat counter through legislation or other remedial regulation; and that the prospect of such regulations in as many as 50 states, plus at local municipal levels would be even more confusion for consumers and certainly would present complex problems for multi-city retailers.

5. That, the identification system which is devised should revolve around the anatomical designations of meat products and include clearly readable label information providing the

name of species (or kind of meat: beef, veal, pork, lamb etc.), the primal or wholesale cut from which a packaged cut is derived, and a common retail name of the packaged cut;

6. Finally, it was agreed that the Meat Board should continue as the appropriate organization for coordinating the meat identification program's development.

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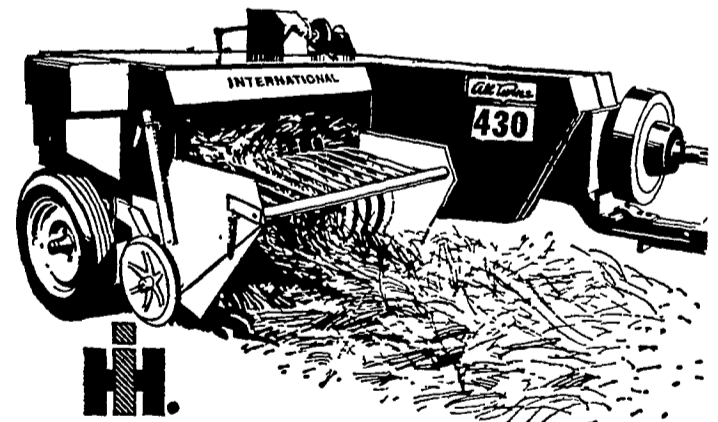
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