

Pork Marketing Team Calls For Industry Improvements

Pork producers need a pork quality grading system, stepped up production research, and better market information, concludes a special marketing team in its report to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz.

These requirements, the team believes, fulfill the study objectives of discovering how to improve the pork industry and raise producers' income.

Secretary Butz appointed the pork marketing team in February as one of five charged with looking for ways to boost farm income. Other teams studied the apple, canning peach, egg, and potato industries.

Commenting on the pork recommendations today in a seminar for industry leaders, Secretary Butz said producers are vitally interested in producing a high quality, nutritious product.

They are concerned, he said, that the marketing system is not securing for pork a relative share of the strong consumer demand for meats.

Recommendations, focusing on

five major industry issues included:

Production Practice

— Define different types of swine production units and estimate costs and returns of each unit for producers.

— Determine effects of unit size on feed efficiency, growth rate, health, and pork quality.

— Determine the most effective and efficient methods of handling swine waste, particularly in confinement units.

— Identify causative agents and develop prevention and control practices to reduce incidence of disease and parasite infestations, particularly those that may have catastrophic impact on the entire swine population.

— Intensify research in breeding, reproduction, and nutrition to increase the number of pigs marketed per sow.

— Identify factors responsible for pork stress syndrome and establish national standards for evaluating superior sizes with potential to produce high value pork products.

Increased competition in feeder

pig and slaughter hog marketing

— Encourage feeder pig producers to assemble larger lots of pigs at fewer market points, commingle and sort, using USDA feeder pig standards.

— "Auction selling by telephone or teletype deserves expansion," the report states.

— Expand and encourage the use of slaughter hog values expressed on a carcass weight basis that reflects the value of the wholesale cuts and by-products.

— Establish a mandatory method of carcass evaluation when selling on a carcass weight and grade basis using uniform grades and carcass prices.

— Aggregate market news for hogs and pork products into appropriate regional quotations for producers' adaptation to local market situations and circumstances.

— Develop an area, regional, or national electronic carcass price negotiating system for selling slaughter hogs, incorporating producer-animal identification, uniform grading, and selling with minimum movement to slaughter.

Producer-animal identification — Establish a uniform national mandatory system of producer and slaughter hog identification.

"In addition to disease and feed safety concerns, "the report states, "this system should be an integral part of the marketing system designed to reward individual producers for marketing high value animals and to assure consumers of the highest quality pork products."

Identifying high quality pork for consumers

Implement a quality pork grading system to improve consumer acceptance of pork products.

"These grades, which might be called 'prime' and 'choice', would be limited to carcasses and products with highly desirable characteristics and provide producers a goal to further improve pork quality."

— Institute programs to further identify quantitative and qualitative attributes of retail fresh and processed pork products.

To facilitate industry adjustment

— Strengthen outlook information—short, intermediate, and long-run—to help producers make production and marketing decisions that will minimize variations in supply.

— Encourage producers to take a more active part, individually and through association with

other producers, to shape the industry.

"Producers are concerned about the nature of their role in this development," states the report. "While most producers apparently are not receptive to the steps necessary to achieve supply or production control, they do expect an increasing amount of contracting and coordination in the industry."

Date and suggestions were gathered from numerous sources, including discussions with hog producers, market operators, processors and distributors, educators, researchers, and administrators of programs related to the industry. The study does not consider, the report states, "the many opportunities for improvement in the processing and marketing of pork that can be made only by processors or retailers."

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