

NCA calls for halt to unproven diet advice

DENVER, Colo. — The National Cattlemen's Assn. has asked that federal agencies stop issuing dietary advice which, without scientific justification, is biased against beef and other animal products.

NCA's recommendation regarding nutrition policy was made in letters and statements sent to the secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, the comment was in response to a request from Vice President George Bush for input on burdensome and ill-advised government regulations and programs.

NCA also made recommendations to the White House and to the appropriate departments and agencies on regulations dealing with food safety, taxes and environmental matters.

The Association's statement on the diet-health issue noted that officials have previously used certain laws as the basis for telling Americans what to eat or not eat. Several publications and reports by USDA, HHS and the Surgeon General's office were cited.

Some of the recommendations, NCA said, have been based largely on opinion and on the unproven and controversial diet-heart hypothesis. Many scientists, NCA explained, do not accept the fat/cholesterol theories, which are based largely on population studies and animal studies rather than clinical evaluations and recent work with free-living persons. The Association cited scientific evidence that some of the government recommendations are not appropriate for healthy Americans.

NCA called particular attention to indications that the government reports have contributed, unjustifiably, to the perception that beef may be an unhealthy food. The cabinet officials were asked to see that any future nutrition information is more accurate, unbiased and based on proper clinical and scientific evidence.

Another NCA statement to administration officials dealt with food safety laws and the regulation of such substances as antibiotics as growth promoting agents in feeds and sodium nitrite as a food preservative in meat products. The Association explained why present laws are scientifically outmoded and too inflexible — resulting in present or threatened inefficiencies in food production.

For one thing, it was emphasized, more realistic benefit and risk assessment procedures are needed.

In the tax area, NCA described an adverse regulation relating to the estate tax valuation of real property. The association also criticized a proposed Internal Revenue Service regulation restricting the investment tax credit on single purpose agricultural structures.

Called to the attention of Interior Department and Environmental Protection Agency officials were several regulations dealing with land, water and animal damage control.

NCA said no effective predator control program now exists, and it was recommended that animal

damage control work be returned to USDA. The need for changes in the 160-acre limitation on farms getting Bureau of Reclamation water was cited. NCA recommended that EPA withdraw its cancellation actions against the herbicides 2,4,5-T and silvex. The association called for changes in Bureau of Land Management policies which unnecessarily reduce livestock grazing on public lands.

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