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New Report Suggests Window of Opportunity for Canada's Beef Industry

(CALGARY) A new report released by three respected individuals outlines the strategic building blocks required for a more profitable, competitive and synergistically aligned Canadian beef industry. The report indicates that there is a “shining light window of opportunity” to propel the beef industry in Canada to a new era of prosperity if the industry is prepared to work together to seize it.

The three individuals are non-vested leaders who have been called ‘the Straw Man Team’. David Andrews and John Kolk, two experienced and respected individuals from southern Alberta with a solid knowledge of the Canadian cattle and beef industry and agri-food marketing specialist Kim McConnell were tasked by the beef industry to initiate dialogue among members of the beef value chain and come forward with recommendations on how to advance the industry. The process began in response to a CAPI, Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, report that showed the Canadian beef industry is not maximizing the significant opportunities that the future offers.

The report, *Building a Stronger Canadian Beef Industry: Recommendations from the Straw Man Process*, is predicated on the reality that the world of beef is changing and Canada is in a unique position to capitalize on this change.

“The shining light of opportunity is based on the convergence of three beams – a supply beam, a demand beam and an assurance beam,” says David Andrews. “Canada is one of only a few countries with the ability to provide both domestic and international customers with a dependable supply of quality beef that meets their specific needs and expectations. The demands of the consumer are changing and with the assurances that the Canadian system can provide in important areas like food safety, traceability, animal welfare and responsible production practices, the future for the Canadian beef industry can and should be very positive.”

The report outlines a series of recommendations based on three important strategic priorities – enhancing profitability, competitiveness and alignment between the various industry sectors from cattle genetics to retail and food service. The first recommendation involves a “Council of Beef Leaders”, an industry forum involving senior representation from all sectors of the supply chain. “There is a strong desire among all sectors of the industry for a forum where issues and opportunities facing the entire beef industry can be thoroughly discussed and a plan to capitalize on the opportunities can emerge,” says Kim McConnell. “Creating a unified industry voice, and developing an action plan focused on meeting the changing expectations of consumers is the purpose of this forum of leaders.”

Other recommendations include the development of industry performance measurements and targets, the creation of a common database and information flow system, the development of an annual ‘industry action plan’, new potential models for funding industry research, promotion and assurance programs, and enhanced communications throughout the entire beef value chain.

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“The straw man process was industry-led and built on a foundation of inclusion and engagement,” says John Kolk. “Hundreds of people from all sectors of the industry eagerly participated and provided their thoughts and ideas.” Kolk adds, “There is strong agreement that Canada has all the ingredients for growth and success, and now is the time to seize the opportunity.”

The recommendations outlined in the straw man report will be presented to a convener who will be initiating the first meeting of the Council of Beef Leaders early in the new year. The straw man process attracted the involvement and support of many players from all sectors of the industry who want to remain involved and are looking to the Council to keep them informed and keep the industry moving forward.

A copy of the report is available on the website www.strawmanbeef.ca

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Copy of the Summary Report is attached to this release

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