

## THE BEEF INDUSTRY'S NEW PRODUCTS INITIATIVES

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A major goal of the Beef Industry Long Range Plan is to provide beef products that meet consumers' desires for convenience and value. For many years, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association has provided industry leadership for the development of new beef products that fit consumers' expectations and lifestyles. Producers, manufacturers and consumers have responded to these initiatives, and in the last three years sales of these types of beef products have increased by more than 40 percent.

In the past consumers have not always considered beef a convenient product. In fact, while many in the beef industry thought ground beef and steaks were excellent examples of "convenience," recent introductions of pre-cooked ground beef crumbles and heat-and-eat steaks show that consumers have different values in that area.

The beef industry's major thrust to encourage greater attention on new beef products was started back in the mid-1990s, when the industry supported research into new products that could be introduced to add value to under-utilized cuts. Beefeatas™ and RiteBite™ Steaks, two checkoff-supported products, provided new "points of entry" into the appetizer and quick-service sandwich markets. These two products increased the value of cuts typically converted for ground beef

The beef industry's New Products and Culinary Center effort is dedicated to increasing the value of the chuck and round and providing time-starved consumers with convenient new beef and veal products. It serves as a catalyst for beef and veal product innovation in four key areas, with the R&D Ranch being the driving force of innovation for the beef industry:

- R&D Ranch: The place where new beef and veal concepts are born, and the lynchpin of the beef industry's total new products effort
- Beef & Veal Culinary Center: Ensures today's new beef and veal products meet consumer expectations through product and packaging evaluation, recipe development and testing, nutrition analysis, and more
- Manufacturer Partnerships: Helps branded partners build success with consumers through marketing support on national and local levels
- Brand Mark: Recognizes the best in new beef products that deliver the taste, quality and satisfaction consumers expect from beef

The industry's new products effort is comprised of a variety of experts with more than 100 years of combined new product experience. These individuals include meat and food scientists, operations experts, marketers, chefs and culinary professionals, who have worked in the meat packing, processing, packaged goods, foodservice and retail industries. Since 1998, the team has participated in the launch of more than 50 new product concepts and is working on several additional concepts for the coming years.

The beef industry created the R&D Ranch concept to jump-start new product development and improve the market price for undervalued beef and veal primals. Beef industry profits currently come from less than one-third of the total beef carcass, principally from ground beef and steaks. The undervalued two-thirds can be a "cash cow" for the beef industry. Through new product development, this two-thirds can be used to create products that offer consumers new conveniences, different flavors and a better eating experience. Producers also benefit from more value for their cattle.

The R&D Ranch team can show industry partners how to transform the chuck and round (which traditionally have been underutilized and more challenging to work with) into a great eating experience. They also use market research to help partners develop products consumers want. Finally, the team helps coordinate sales and marketing efforts – from cooking instructions and packaging to public relations – to help facilitate market success.

During 2000 even more focus was put on new product category for beef through the "Best New Beef Products Awards," which were presented to companies that introduced consumer-friendly products that were delicious and could be easily prepared.

Some ideas for new beef products that have recently been introduced or are being investigated include:

**Boneless Beef Filet.** More than 1 billion pounds of boneless skinless chicken breasts are sold annually in this country. The boneless beef filet is a delicious marinated beef chuck steak that can be cooked quickly and compete with the chicken breast to provide consumers with a beef option for their sandwiches and recipes at home and in restaurants.

**Ground Beef Crumbles.** Almost half of all beef is sold in ground form. Farmland has taken the convenience of the product one step further by producing pre-cooked, seasoned ground beef crumbles sold in convenient packaging. This gives many consumers a step-up when making tacos, chili, spaghetti sauce and other meal items.

**Seasoned Rotisserie Roast.** Rotisserie chickens have proven highly successful in supermarkets; therefore, a savory product that could compete with that product has been developed from beef.

**Cheeseburger Fries.** The snack and appetizer market is an opportunity not frequently investigated by the beef industry. But this breaded, beef finger food, made with seasoned beef and cheddar cheese, can compete with chicken nuggets and chicken fingers as appetizers, a kid's meal item or quick-serve meal.

Through the many efforts of the New Products and Culinary Center, the beef industry is finding new ways to meet the changing needs and wants of today's consumer.