

Consumer attitudes, behaviors toward beef improve

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Summary

Data from the July 2008 checkoff-funded Consumer Beef Index indicates positive trends in consumers' attitudes and behaviors regarding beef. Beef's performance has improved, often significantly, against many of the various indicators measured from the initial benchmark study in January 2007.

Background

In late 2006, the Consumer Beef Index evaluative tool was developed and launched using Beef Checkoff funding to provide a meaningful, actionable, data-driven performance measure of change in consumer perceptions of beef in both in-home and foodservice environments. This consumer-focused tool is a summary of various leading indicators, including both attitudinal and behavioral data, used to assess the impact of the beef industry's efforts to communicate the strengths of beef. Three online surveys have followed the January 2007 benchmark study – one in May of 2007 and two in 2008.

The 2008 waves were conducted to measure beef's equity among consumers across several key dimensions:

- **Brand health:** assessing beef's status as the protein of choice, the extent to which beef is incorporated into meals, the consumer's evolving protein choices and the perceptions of beef's relative strengths and weaknesses.
- **Brand pull:** measuring beef's market share relative to competing meat proteins and tracking consumption frequency.
- **Brand momentum:** monitoring key purchase drivers of beef use.
- **Beef perception:** assessing the consumer's perspective on the ability of beef's positive aspects to outweigh the negatives.
- **Competitive context:** assessing the strength of beef relative to chicken.
- **Changes over time:** evaluating how perceptions and attitudes toward beef have changed over time.

In July 2008, more than 1,000 consumers were surveyed from a nationally representative sample of U.S. households, balanced for gender, age and region, excluding those who do not influence their household's grocery shopping, meal preparation or selection of away-from-home meals.

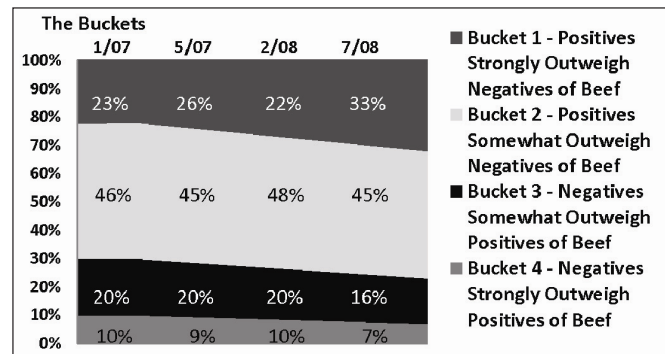
Beef use on strong, consistent upward trend

The July 2008 index indicated some major shifts since 2007. Consumers are increasingly more engaged with their food selection and meal preparation, particularly for in-home meal choices. They consider a wider variety of taste, nutrition and preparation characteristics important in making food choices.

The number of times consumers choose beef per week has grown from 1.9 in January 2007 to 2.5 in July 2008. Past, present and anticipated future beef use are on strong and consistent upward trends, with consumers choosing beef as the best tasting protein source, quick and easy to prepare, providing lasting satisfaction and appropriate for special occasions. In addition, the consumer's willingness to feel good about beef and eat it every day has improved.

Beef's positive aspects outweigh the negatives

Strengthened consumer perception of beef is further indicated by the growth of "Bucket 1," consumers who are strongly positive about beef, from 22 percent to 33 percent, while the somewhat positive "Bucket 2" consumers remain at nearly half of the market.



Beef narrows gap on chicken's nutrition and balance attributes

Chicken still leads beef in frequency of current use, anticipated future use and health-related perceptions. However, beef is stronger than chicken on protein content, taste, satisfaction and other sensory rewards and is closing the gap on frequency of weekly use and a number of nutrition, preparation and value perceptions. The number of consumers who believe that beef delivers on "a balance of taste and nutrition" has increased from 57 percent in January 2007 to 71 percent in May 2008.

Taste most important for main-dish dinner choice

Consistently, consumers have chosen “great tasting” as the most important characteristic when making their main-dish dinner choice. In July 2008, 88 percent ranked taste as extremely or very important in choosing a main-dish for consumption at home. Safety and value ranked second and third at 79 percent and 77 percent, respectively.

Key Points

- The number of times consumers choose beef per week has grown from 1.9 in January 2007 to 2.5 in July 2008.
- “Bucket 1” consumers, representing beef’s most satisfied consumers, are up from 22 percent of the market in February 2008 to 33 percent of the market in July 2008.
- Beef has narrowed the gap against chicken on ability to deliver “balance and nutrition.”
- In July 2008, 88 percent of consumers ranked taste as extremely or very important when choosing a main dish for consumption at home.