Focusing on Food Safety and Beef Quality

- In the mid-1980s, the beef industry started identifying food safety and quality issues in beef products.
- These issues led to a decline in consumer confidence and established the need for the first National Beef Quality Audit (1991), which identified quality defects that impaired beef’s competitiveness with other meat products.

Extension’s Response

- In response to the first National Beef Quality Audit, the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association initiated the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Program to educate beef producers on management practices that ensure production of a safe, high-quality beef product.
- In partnership with the Texas Beef Council and the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service began educating Texas producers on BQA principles.
- The mission of the BQA Program is to promote management practices that enable cattle producers to improve beef quality and strengthen consumer confidence in beef as a safe, nutritious, wholesome food product.

AgriLife Extension programs targeting BQA principles and practices include the Texas Beef Quality Producer Program, Beef 706, Beef Partnership Extension Program (Beef PEP), and the Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course.

- These programs provide participants with education and hands-on training about animal health, nutrition, reproduction, animal care and husbandry practices, pasture/hay management, cattle values and marketing, selection of carcass traits, accounting and performance records, and other core practices.
- These programs also provide systematic information to cattle producers nationwide on production methods and practices for improving beef quality and safety under a wide variety of management and environmental conditions.

Economic Impact

- In 2011, these BQA education programs reached participants owning or managing more than 470,000 head of cattle, resulting in an estimated economic impact of $6.5 million.
- The cumulative economic impact of the BQA education programs since 2007 is an estimated $40.7 million.

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