



Cattlemen welcome proposed interstate meat shipping program

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Washington, Dec. 21 – The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) has submitted comments to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) regarding a proposed rule to allow the interstate shipping of certain meat and poultry products. The proposal would establish a new cooperative state program, as directed under section 11015 of the 2008 Farm Bill, to permit the sale and shipment of meat across state lines. The program is designed to help small establishments grow their businesses and open up new opportunities for cattle producers to do business at the local level. Currently, meat processors operating under cooperative state inspection programs are prohibited from selling their products out of state.

“This program is a great opportunity to grow local demand for beef and increase competition,” said NCBA Director of Legislative Affairs Kristina Butts. “NCBA fought for this provision in the 2008 Farm Bill and we’re pleased that USDA is finally working towards its implementation.”

While NCBA is pleased with the spirit of the program, it is asking FSIS to clarify guidance for establishments in states which potentially become ineligible to participate. The proposed rule states that once an establishment applies to participate, it would have to transition and become federally inspected if it were ever deselected from the program. It’s unclear what would happen to establishments participating in the voluntary program in the event its respective state was to become ineligible to participate.

“It could be devastating to local markets if a plant had to shut down because it’s not allowed to revert back to being a regular state-inspected plant,” said Butts.

Cattle producers appreciate the opportunity for states to apply for transition grants to reimburse selected establishments for the cost of employee Hazardous Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) training and the development of sanitation standard operating procedures. In order to encourage broad participation, NCBA is asking FSIS to notify states and establishments of the training opportunities to produce the safest products possible.

“Safety is a non-competitive issue for the beef industry and we encourage USDA to continue working with the industry, stakeholders and states to achieve our common goal

of producing safe beef products,” Butts continued. “This program will help ensure that high quality product continues to be delivered into the marketplace, while providing cattle producers and consumers the opportunity for more local beef supplies.”

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#30