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## BeefTalk: The Future of Beef: We Need to Get it Right!



**We need to guide beef production and other farm and ranch production into the future.**

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

The Native American saying, "We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children," is a reminder that we need to think ahead.

Sustainable beef production is a lot more than a phrase; in fact, it's the future. And the future belongs to our children, so we need to get it right.

Our children born today may have our grandchildren in 2041. Our grandchildren may have our great-grandchildren in 2066. And our great-grandchildren may have our great-great-

### Images



Native American saying - "We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

## columns

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Several youth bring home awards from the 4-H Communication Arts contest at the State Fair. [FULL STORY](#)

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We need to guide beef production and other farm and ranch production into the future. [FULL STORY](#)

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grandchildren in 2091. As distant as it sounds, the birth of our great-great-great-grandchildren will occur early in the next century, 100 years from today.

We can agree: Our children are the future. A few of us might actually still be here, enjoying beef. Most certainly, some of our children and grandchildren, many of our great-grandchildren and almost all of our great-great-grandchildren and great-great-great-grandchildren will be here.

Our decisions today are for those who come after us. Our correct thoughts and actions will prepare the world for them; our mistakes will take a bit of the world away. So in our own space, we need to do what we can. In this case, we need to guide beef production and other farm and ranch production into the future.

What makes up the “beef industry”? The “beef industry” is a comingling of many components. So what does this mean? Who is the “beef industry”? Who do we need to put around the table to adequately discuss and ensure sustainable beef production long into the future?

Let’s set the table and invite our guests. The obvious invitation goes to a beef producer; after all, we are based in the production of beef. Plant life is paramount to the balance of our farm and ranch, so let us invite our neighbor who raises plants. Animals and plants must have healthy soil,

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so let's invite someone who knows soil and the associated biology that soil contains.

Just as we eat, we must feed the organisms that live in the soil. Their food, a mixture of elements derived from the recycling of the many plants and animals, needs water and air, so we certainly need to have someone who understands water and someone who will provide insight into clean air.

Although we often stop there, those guests make up an incomplete list. What about the energy (renewable and nonrenewable) needed to start and enhance our desire to sustain our farm and ranch, to protect the quality of our air, water and soil? Let's invite someone who has a good understanding of energy.

And who will consume the results of our production? The consumer should be at the table to reflect not only the desire to obtain the food the farm and ranch produces, but also the opportunity for shared use of space as our separate but integrated lives utilize air, water and soil for food and fun.

Two more chairs need to go to someone who understands wellness and someone who knows leisure. Wellness integrates our personal lives with work because our own individual and family wellness reflects the balance we each place on raising beef and integrating family and friends.

A well person is most likely a happy person. And a

balance of work and leisure is critical to our long-term success and development of relationships with our own children and their children. We should have someone invited to make sure we know and understand the fullness of life, not just work.

The chairs around the table are almost full, so some order may be advised to handle issues or recommend solutions if a difference of opinion arises. Let's invite someone with the organizational skills to focus our discussion on the topic at hand, the sustainable future of beef production, and to provide balance and a buffering of our demands upon air, water and soil. That being said, the table is full.

But wait, what about all those people around the world, the differing cultures that provide the backdrop, the color and diversity to our daily lives? We need someone who knows cultural impacts and how they may spin the very essence in the human interactions we so need to properly address long-term sustainability.

The table is most certainly full and the discussion ready to commence. But wait, who will bless the meal? Finally, the last guest arrives, the blessing is given and the table of 12 is now full. The inclusiveness of philosophies, traditions, spirituality and beliefs brings the diversity of the table to completion.

One asks, "How did this all happen?" But we are speaking of 100 years. New thoughts become old thoughts; old thoughts renew themselves. Truly, if new sustainable thoughts are to evolve, then the table must represent the total "beef industry." And total means input from the many tugging directions that impact the "beef industry." Enjoy the diversity, the openness yet challenges, always keeping our children first.

May you find all your ear tags.

For more information, contact your local NDSU Extension Service agent (<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/directory>) or Ringwall at the Dickinson Research Extension Center, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601; 701-456-1103; or [✉kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu](mailto:kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu).


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#### Attachments



[PDF - Native American saying - "We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."](#) 

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EPS - Native American saying - "We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

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