

A World Influence

Celebrate May with the world's greatest and most efficient protein.



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May is recognized as National Beef Month, and it reminds us to get those grills fired up and ready to prepare our favorite healthy beef dishes. This month also gives us an opportunity to reflect on beef's influence on domestic and world economies. It reminds us how the beef industry has evolved over the decades.

Industry efficiencies

The U.S. is a leader in sustainable beef production, proven through studies conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service and the Beef Checkoff program. Recent studies show beef production is responsible for only 2% of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. On average, it takes 308 gallons of recycled water to produce one pound of boneless beef. In total, water use for beef production accounts for only 5% of U.S. water withdrawals. Additionally, total fossil fuel energy input to U.S. beef cattle production is equivalent to 0.7% of total national consumption of fossil fuels.

Cattle are often referred to as "natural upcyclers" to describe their ability to produce protein for human consumption by eating foods which humans cannot consume. Beef cattle produce more protein for human consumption than would exist without them because of their digestive system. We also need to remind others that through genetics and production innovations, the U.S. beef industry produces the same amount of beef with one-third fewer cattle compared to 45 years ago.

Beef plays a vital role in a healthy diet. A 3-ounce serving of lean beef provides essential nutrients through approximately 170 calories. This serving includes high-quality protein,

zinc, iron and B vitamins. Lean beef is recommended as part of a heart-healthy diet and is important to build and maintain muscle. It is especially important to include beef in children's diets to help build both a strong mind and body.

Additionally, there are approximately 700,000 cattle farms and ranches in the U.S. With an average size of 40 head of cattle, these operations produce about 19% of the world's beef. Beef farms make up about 35% of all farms. It is also reported that 91% of beef cattle operations are family-owned and operated. The entire meat industry provides about 5.4 million jobs and accounts for nearly \$254 billion in wages. This is an incredible industry to be a part of, and the influence it has on the world economy is staggering.

Paying homage

On Monday, May 31, we celebrate Memorial Day. This holiday dates back to the Civil War. Inspired by the way people in the southern states honored fallen soldiers, the holiday started as an event to honor soldiers who had died during the war. The original national celebration took place May 30, 1868, and was called Decoration Day.

In the late 19th century, the holiday became known as Memorial Day and was celebrated on May 30 regardless of the day of the week. In 1968, the Uniform Holidays Bill was passed. As a result, the celebration date changed to the last Monday of May. As we celebrate this Memorial Day, may God bless all who have lost family and friends who fought to protect our country. **HW**

Editor's note: Statistics in this article are provided by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the USDA.