



International Trade Update

by **Meghan Soderstrom**

Economic growth in other countries plays an important role in the demand for American beef.

DENVER, CO (Feb. 3, 2006) — Market access remained the topic of conversation at the International Markets Committee meeting at the 2006 Cattle Industry Convention Feb. 3 in Denver, Colo. U.S. Trade Representative Chief Agriculture Negotiator Richard Crowder opened the committee meeting with an update on recent trade negotiations, and representatives from the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) distributed a report on its overseas programs to regain market share for U.S. beef and beef products.

Bilateral free-trade agreements (FTAs) and multilateral negotiations through the World Trade Organization (WTO) should be seen as tools to improve agricultural trade, Crowder said. “Even though it may seem like the negotiation process is going slow, if you look back at what we’ve accomplished and where we would be without these negotiations, you realize how valuable they are.”

“Opening markets remains our central goal,” Crowder said. “Without export markets, U.S. production and returns would be much smaller.”

“Consider that 5% of the world’s population lives in the United

States. Let me put that another way: 95% of the world’s population — our customers and potential customers — live outside of the United States,” he explained. “Market access is the most important, but most difficult, task that we face.”

Economic growth in other countries plays an important role in the demand for American beef. “Fostering demand in other countries means increasing incomes. As incomes in other countries rise, so does the demand for food and value-added products like your beef,” he said.

Crowder added that FTAs could “lift tens of millions of people out of poverty.”

The United States currently has FTAs with 17 countries, Crowder said, and it is in the process of negotiating FTAs with 10 other countries.

“Our goal with FTAs is to improve science-based decision-making and confront those trade barriers that are not based on internationally accepted science.”

“WTO negotiations allow us to address big issues and opportunities that are important to you, our farmers and ranchers,” Crowder said. He named “opening

markets by cutting tariffs and limiting export subsidies” as two of the main issues the WTO can address.

Member countries of the WTO who have the highest tariffs will be

subject to the highest cuts, he said. The European Union (EU) will likely see the largest cuts in the current Doha Round of WTO negotiations, followed by Japan and the U.S.



Editor's Note: This article was written under contract or by staff of Angus Productions Inc. (API), which claims copyright to this material. It may not be published or distributed without the express permission of Angus Productions Inc. (API). To request reprint permission and guidelines, contact Shauna Rose Hermel, editor, at (816) 383-5270 or shermel@angusjournal.com.