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NATIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BEEF ASSOCIATION

Chuck Lambert

This conference is the first time I have participated with this group. I hope that I have brought something to the table, because it has been a very good learning experience for me.

We have many more issues in common than we have in conflict. In the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) round, we all want to be sure that the European Union (EU) does not rollback the progress we have made to date with respect to STS agreements and to using a science-based resolution to settle disputes. Sometime in the next two or three years, we will address China's accession to settle the WTO. That will involve discussions about state trading entities, tariff rollbacks, and inspection equivalence. We will also likely revisit a Western Hemisphere alliance. Many of us will be addressing—if not together, then separately—similar issues.

The conference hit many of the issues that the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), as an organization, is facing on a daily basis. We lobbied heavily for fast track authority. Currently, we are lobbying for International Monetary Fund (IMF) funding. We are facing challenges to continued Market Access Program (MAP) funding. The whole U.S. budget and appropriations process is currently underway. There are many things which relate to trade in that process. This conference addressed food safety, technology applications, environmental issues, restructuring and contractual alignments.

There has been a lot of soul searching and philosophical debate in the beef industry recently. The United States is experiencing not only a reorganization of the beef industry, but a reorganization of beef industry organizations.

Two years ago, the National Cattlemen's Association has been through a merger and realignment with the National Livestock and Meat Board. It has merged marketing and policy and is now the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. As the industry has changed, those organizations and support mechanisms that work with the beef industry have changed. Change in the underlying industry will drive change in the supporting organizations and institutions. This process will continue in the future.