

CASE STUDY

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT WITH THE CANADIAN ROUNDTABLE FOR SUSTAINABLE BEEF



The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) looked to NSF International to further its mission to advance sustainability in the Canadian beef industry. As a strategic and tactical advisor, NSF supported the CRSB in developing the CRSB to develop the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* with the mission of driving the advancement and recognition of beef sustainability in Canada through a world-class, operation-level certification program using qualified trained auditors.

PROBLEM: ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE BEEF

Formed in 2014, the CRSB is a multi-stakeholder organization focused on advancing sustainability efforts in the Canadian beef industry. The CRSB operates as a division of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, and as such, is governed by its own membership and elected Council directors. The CRSB's mandate is to promote sustainability throughout the Canadian beef industry through three pillars of focus: Sustainability Benchmarking, A Certification Framework and Sustainability Projects.

The CRSB, through working groups and committees, developed a certification framework for the entire beef value chain, but needed an organization to conduct a technical review of this framework and operationalize the program. This included developing a certification body oversight plan and market equivalencies for other relevant standards in the marketplace.

SOLUTIONS

In pursuit of its mission to drive the advancement and recognition of beef sustainability in Canada through a world-class, operation-level certification program, the CRSB turned to NSF.



NSF currently manages a variety of second-party audit programs and serves as a third-party independent certification body for food and sustainability-focused programs. NSF is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) and the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). NSF has facilitated the development of over 80 voluntary American National Standards under the scope of public health, safety, environment and sustainability assessment.

With over 30 years of beef industry expertise, with direct experience with global beef industry structures, regulatory environments, trade pressures and distribution of beef cattle farming, NSF was well positioned to help the CRSB operationalize the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*.

NSF's cross-functional team included experts in animal production, health and welfare, nutrition, feed production and safety, on-farm and harvesting/processing food safety, assurance system and scheme management, labeling requirements and label claims. They understand the distinct features and challenges of the Canadian landscape and climate, land use, feed availability and environmental and social impacts of cattle grazing, and intensive grow-out operations.



Working under tight deadlines, NSF conducted a technical review of the draft framework, made recommendations that aligned the framework with certification and audit requirements, and created supporting documents that allowed the program to be operated with proper oversight.

The project team assessed needs and developed a variety of supporting documents, including certification body requirements, a Certification Body oversight process, certification cycle, auditor guidance documents and audit checklists.

As part of the engagement, NSF created processes for reviewing and accepting Certification Bodies and has implemented an annual oversight plan, allowing the CRSB to announce beef from Certified Operations. An auditor training program, based on NSF's long background in developing training, promoted a deep understanding of both the requirements of the program and the application of the assessment criteria that auditors need on the ranch.

Currently, NSF serves as the CRSB's Oversight Body, assessing and reviewing Certification Bodies interested in delivering certification services on behalf of the CRSB and providing third-party oversight of the CRSB Framework.

RESULTS

NSF's expertise in program development and stakeholder engagement enabled the CRSB to:

- > **Finalize the Certification framework:** NSF conducted a technical review of the framework and advised the CRSB to make the framework ready for a certification system.
- > **Select certification bodies:** NSF reviewed Certification Body applications and onboarded applicants, putting the CRSB in a position to begin certifications.
- > **Develop effective auditor training:** NSF developed effective online learning materials to maximize formal learning and connect the understanding and application of the program to the assessment activities expected of the auditors.
- > **Create program documents:** NSF developed an auditor manual that outlined the requirements a farm must meet to achieve certification, as well as acceptable equivalencies associated with each level of certification (achievement, innovation and excellence). These certification requirements also included recommended practices an auditor could complete when reviewing each indicator. The audit manual also provided instructions and details for reporting requirements, audit submissions, corrective action processes and supplemental information to support determining whether a farm meets the CRSB requirements.
- > **Operationalize a certification framework:** Now fully launched as a cornerstone of the CRSB's operations, the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* provides a tool to certify farms, ranches and processing facilities against sustainability standards, supports retail and foodservice companies to meet sustainable sourcing commitments, and provides sustainability messaging for consumers through marketing labels and claims enabling purchasing of beef from Certified Operations.
- > **Provide third-party oversight of the Certified Sustainable Beef Framework:** NSF provides ongoing oversight of the Certification Bodies to ensure both the CRSB and the certification bodies have standardized requirements, proper program assurance and oversight.

For more information, visit www.nsf.sustainability.org or email sustainability@nsf.org.

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789 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105 USA | www.nsf.org