
MLA program update – May/June 2012

This report aims to provide the Peak Industry Councils and State Farming Organisations with a brief overview of key MLA program progress as per our strategic imperatives. This is not a comprehensive report on all MLA programs, however highlights some of MLA's recent activities.

Maintaining and improving market access

Trade

Improving market access

- Mexico and Canada have joined the Trans Pacific Partnership (a group aiming for freer trade across Asia/Pacific countries). As Australia does not at present have FTA's with either Mexico or Canada, the TPP provides potential opportunities. MLA is planning meetings, in conjunction with the Australian Government, with industry organisations and Governments in these countries.
- Middle East & North Africa – Gap analysis have been conducted in Jordan, Israel and Saudi Arabia to assist supply chains prepare for the implementation of ESCAS on the 1st September. A training program is also being developed to assist with implementation.

Enhancing product integrity

- A new NLIS User Guide for Saleyards and Agents has been released. This is available from the NLIS website, with printed copies provided on request. The new guide reflects additional functionality and reports that have been made available as well as some cosmetic changes on the database.
- The SAFEMEAT Initiatives Review industry/government Working Group is developing a vision and roadmap for the SAFEMEAT initiatives, with the proposed vision endorsed by SAFEMEAT Partners in late June. The Working Group is aiming to deliver their final recommendations to SAFEMEAT Partners in November 2012.
- The LPA accreditation renewal program is planned to commence from 1 August 2012. Producers will be asked to reconfirm their commitment to the requirements of the LPA program when they order NVD books.

Growing demand

Achieving consistent eating quality

- The Near-Infrared (NIR) data collection for objective measurement of beef grading attributes was successfully conducted at two plants and data analysis is currently underway. The overall data set should provide a good platform to calculate representative NIR calibration and prediction models for all nominated MSA meat quality traits.
- The data collection phase of Near-Infrared (NIR) scans on warm sheep carcasses for predicting ultimate pH (pHu) has been successfully completed and data analysis is currently underway.
- Sheep CRC data has confirmed that yearling sheep eating quality in topside is lower than for lamb. It has also shown that although sire solutions between lamb and yearling are positive they do differ and this is predominately related to flavour.

- A MSA long distance transport trial has commenced, comparing a variety of transport regimes across a range of cattle types and locations. Sensory testing of collected primal cuts will be undertaken during July–August 2012.
- MSA Beef Grading numbers for May were 191,999 head – a 44% increase on May 2011. The forecast for 2011-12 is two million head – a 41% increase on 2010-2011.
- Lambs presented for grading in May were 437,017 head. The forecast for the 2011-12 year is three million lambs with 250,000 trademarked as MSA.
- NLRS average over the hooks price differential for MSA cattle (NSW and QLD) was 20c/kg.

Beef marketing

- Beef winter meals campaign is in full swing, with activity now into ‘phase 2’, focussing on the promotion of ‘Beefgiving Day’ on July 14. Apart from mainstream media, numerous tactical and social media devices are being employed to embed the ‘perfect for cold weather’ message.
- MLA is developing a program to communicate the MSA refresh to the foodservice sector. A large focus of this campaign will be trade marketing activities with wholesalers. A review of how to communicate 3, 4 and 5 star MSA product is also underway.
- Woolworths has launched a range of MSA slow cook cuts including gravy beef, osso bucco, beef chuck and diced beef. MLA, Woolworths and Ayam (an Asian ingredient supplier) have joined forces to conduct sampling in 150 stores nationally to launch the MSA slow cook beef range. Sampling will consist of diced beef with a rendang sauce.
- Coles in partnership with Australian Country Choice (ACC) launched a new beef brand “Drovers Pride”. The product is underpinned by MSA with the new MSA trademark logo included on the packaging. The range includes; porterhouse, eye fillet, rib eye on the bone and flat iron steak. Beef cheeks are also being packed under the brand, but are not MSA graded.
- To coincide with the winter beef roast campaign Coles has also launched two new beef roast products; sirloin roast and sirloin roast with shiraz and pepper berry sauce.
- Coles Finest flagship beef brand will also be relaunched in July with the MSA trademark logo included on the packaging. Whist the brand or product has always used MSA to maintain a consistent eating quality, the new packaging will clearly communicate to consumers the use of the grading system. The product is sourced from Hopkins River Beef in the south and Rangers Valley beef processed at ACC in the north.

Lamb marketing

- Lamb’s value share was up slightly for the three months ending 14/4/12, to 13.4% (up from 13.1% in the corresponding period last year). The campaign cost \$1.8 million and total lamb sales for the Australia Day week totalled \$18.5m and for the month totalled \$63.6m. This was well up on the \$17m for the 2011 Australia Day week and \$59.6m for the four week period in the same year.

Nutrition

- Digital promotion of weight loss diet “Look good, feel good” targeting young women since May achieved click through rate of 0.11% (average CTR = 0.05%) with Cosmopolitan magazine sponsored competition attracting 663 entrants. Media coverage achieved since launch is estimated at over \$4 million.
- Paid Google search over last 6 months on preparing nutritious red meat meals for babies achieved CTR of 3.64% with ‘homemade baby food recipes’ the most popular search (CTR 13.4%).
- Vital newsletter was distributed to 4,500 dietitians highlighting emerging research that suggests a positive association between zinc deficiency and risk of diabetes, and findings from

recent MLA-funded retail survey indicating majority of beef mince available for purchase is lean (<10% fat).

- PR activity supporting the Beef Campaign promoting benefits of iron and zinc-rich beef casserole recipes for immunity was conducted during May.

International Marketing

Japan:

- Iron focused activities continue (both trade and consumer), including “Iron-Beauty” seminars for meat distributors, wholesalers and targeted campaigns for consumers.
- June saw the third “Iron-Beauty” delegation to Australia. Participants experienced paddock-to-plate scenarios.
- MLA conducted a “Sheepmeat Day” campaign with key national and regional retailers. Approx 1,000 outlets participated. Australian lamb gift sets will be sent out to 100 winners every month.

Korea:

- In support of the retail giant E-mart’s new Australian beef steak patty product, MLA has provided simple home cooking recipes developed by MLA (David Carew).
- A monthly ‘Kids Love Australian Beef eNewsletter’ was launched in May containing home meal recipes, a health column, family activity review and web comics.

South Asia:

- MLA and an expat magazine hosted a BBQ session for the expat community in Malaysia attended by more than 300 people. The chef prepared a spit roast lamb and minute steak.
- The MLA Red Majesty program featured a ‘Red Ruby’ food tasting event in 12 Malaysian Chinese restaurants. Each restaurant featured Australian beef as part of their eight course set menu.
- MLA was Primary Partner and Official Premium Partner at the World Gourmet Summit series held in Singapore. Australian lamb featured throughout many of the events held over the week-long event.

Middle East:

- A three-day workshop was held in Jordan with training on cuts, cutting and presentation of Australian Beef along with a range of value added lines.
- Ramadan promotions are being held in selected retail outlets (19 June to 29 August). The campaign tag line of “*Chef Tarek Recommends*” features MLA’s Business Development Manager Tarek Ibrahim (also a local celebrity chef) recommending easy meals at point-of-sale and in selected print media.
- MLA sponsored a radio competition in Dubai this month featuring the Iconic Lady Gaga. MLA took radio spots promoting Australian beef with the first prize being a trip to Australia to see Lady Gaga live in Melbourne.
- In-store sampling of lamb leg steaks in Jordan has contributed to a 125% sales increase for the promotional period. The importer is being trained to conduct their own ongoing sampling of Australian lamb.

USA:

- Australian beef was a gold sponsor for the Rising Star Chefs Gala in Atlanta GA and was featured in dishes over three events.
- Australian lamb was a gold sponsor of the two-day Protein Innovation Summit held in Chicago, attended by executive chefs from the foodservice industry, and distributors. MLA developed a video focussing on promoting Australian livestock and our red meat industry’s sustainability message.
- MLA presented a lamb butchery/information session to butchers from a high-end NY retailer. The session focussed on alternative cuts to the rack and positive attributes of Australian lamb.

EU/Russia:

- MLA participated in a chefs table featuring Australian beef in Brussels.
- MLA has supported the International Salon “Restaurant and Hotel World” in Moscow promoting Australian beef.

Increasing productivity across the supply chain

Ensuring Sustainability and Demonstrating Environmental Stewardship

- 520 dung beetles that are active in early winter have been imported from France. The beetles are in quarantine, mass rearing is underway and the first eggs have hatched. First releases will be in 2014.
- Preliminary screening of mechanical and chemical options for the control and management of rubber bush in northern Australia has been completed and some options are showing promise for use to eradicate and control this weed.
- Development of new wastewater treatment processes for red meat abattoir wastewater, as alternatives to anaerobic ponds, has commenced. Research will be undertaken to develop new high-rate treatment processes based on anaerobic reactors, which require much lower footprint. These processes have been successful in Europe and are gaining way into the US market, whereas uptake in Australia has been very limited so far. Progress after the first year of study show that the Anaerobic Membrane Bio-Reactor is looking very promising for the red meat industry, as is a high-rate Sequencing Batch Reactor combined with anaerobic digestion (reactor) and anammox bacteria, which is a low-energy input way of removing nutrient nitrogen.
- MLA will release a toolkit for assessing and managing biodiversity on grazing lands. The toolkit is a result of a large, field-based project funded by MLA and the Qld Government, which aimed to develop a practical and systematic approach for condition assessment of grazing lands for biodiversity.

Responding to climate change

- The Reducing Emissions from Livestock Research Program (RELRP) Final Report was accepted by DAFF on 20th June 2012. The Program commenced in 2009 and consisted of 43 research projects and 8 consultancy agreements. It had a combined budget of \$15.5 million. The RELP program delivered an upgraded FarmGas calculator which is available to producers, rumen profiling tools that have been used in collaborative projects and identified genetic, feed supplements and forage plant options that may lower methane emissions. Work in this area will continue under the National Livestock Methane Program which has 17 projects approved with a total budget of \$14.4 million. MLA will manage the co-ordination of these projects on behalf of DAFF.

Increasing productivity on-farm

- Feedbase Investment Plan - implementation of projects within the program's five pillars is progressing including establishment of six pasture variety trial sites; Phosphorus efficiency – benchmarking project contracted and underway; and EverGraze contract approved.

Improving animal health and biosecurity

- A research project looking at the efficacy of a fungal bio-pesticide sprayed onto cattle was completed. Inadequate efficacy was seen against cattle tick and 1 week efficacy against buffalo fly.

Supporting industry integrity and sustainability

Community Communications

- Target 100 promotion carried out with 70 chefs in Sydney and Melbourne, resulting in several opportunities to promote the program directly to school and university students through catering companies' cafeterias.
- The third live forum on Target 100's Facebook page was with chef Justin North and attracted over 600 people to the forum with 35 individuals commenting in the discussion. Target 100 social media activity continues to grow steadily with over 14,900 hits since program launch in March 2012.
- The eighth social media producer workshop was held in Tasmania. The workshops have resulted in nine new producer blogs being established and increased volume of producer comments on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Promoting MLA tools to help producers advocate for industry is also a focus through speaking at producer events – 3,140 people have accessed the tools, tips and information at mla.com.au/community since February 2012.

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Increasing industry and people capability

Increasing adoption of innovation

- The FutureBeef program and website was launched to 60 guests at Beef Australia. Covering northern Australia, the program brings together the efforts of state government agriculture agencies and MLA to provide a coordinated approach to extension and information delivery. www.futurebeef.com.au

Working with industry to attract, develop and retain world-class people

- MLA will support the Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE) for 1 year. PICSE supports secondary school agricultural science education with the objective of increasing the quality and quantity of students choosing to study agricultural-related science at university level.

Events

- Four BeefUp forums were recently held in southern Queensland with 185 people in attendance.
- Three BusinessEDGE workshops were held in southern Queensland with 38 people in attendance. In a survey of participants, workshops averaged 9 out of 10 for value. Pre skills audit averaged 37% correct, post skills audit averaged 72%.
- MLA will be holding a Meat Profit Day in Albany, WA on Tuesday 28 August.

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