



Beef challenges continue to grow with rise of 'clean meat'

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Torrington, Wyo. – “Clean meat” is quite possibly the next major challenge facing U.S. beef producers. This was the message Angie Chavez presented to her fellow Goshen County Cattlewomen members during their March 1 meeting in Torrington.

Chavez, raised in the cattle country north of Torrington, shared information she compiled after learning about “clean meat” several weeks ago.

“Livestock producers are used to dealing with many challenges, like drought, snow, wind, fire, market prices, but this is different,” Chavez said.

She reviewed a few challenges cattlemen have faced since the 1970s, including scientific findings as well as “fads,” including methane emissions, “cattle free by ‘03”, and challenges from vegetable replacements such as “veggie” burgers.

“Now we have a new competitor – clean meat,” she announced. “This ‘meat,’ grown in laboratories, is derived from cells of calf fetuses. Many large groups are behind this ‘clean meat’.

“I first heard about it on TV a couple of months ago, so began researching. I’m not a scientist, but if Alec Baldwin can appear on CNN with this info, some of it erroneous, I felt I could give it a shot as well.”

According to Chavez, Baldwin claimed that producing beef requires 20 times more land than producing beans. So, livestock foods, especially beef, are an environmental pirate, stealing resources necessary to grow more plant based foods. One “cure” would be to increase taxes on red meat and other foods they consider unhealthy.

Chavez said that one international non-profit organization, CAS, is soliciting online donations for its campaign to advance cellular agriculture. Viewers are invited to join the “community of clean meat enthusiasts.”

She added that according to the New York Times, 100 years ago it warned that by mid-century crops would no longer be viable due to global warming. By the early 1970s, an ice age was predicted that would prevent crop production in the northern United States.

“Now it’s back to warming, again,” Chavez said. “The earth has always had climate change. It’s the media who have used examples of localized weather, particularly hurricanes, to talk about climate change.”

She went on to explain that a university scientist in Colorado, believes the numbers are worse because there is more media, and more people who have more “valuable” stuff in harm’s way.

Citing a 2016 article in Science Magazine, Chavez explained that scientists, not science, are determining climate forecasts. According to that publication, the Russian model has the most efficient forecasting because it uses actual temperatures, rather than figures based on temperature changes between 1910 and 1945, used by other models.

“There are a number of folks entrenched in perpetuating this dialog,” Chavez said. “It has brought about the proposals of the Green New Deal to get rid of cattle, air travel, cars as we know them, without any thought of the numerous economic sectors this would impact. And all of this in 10 years – yet you see so many politicians jumping on board. There is no thought of not only the many sectors related to animal agriculture, but of the many by-products beef affords.”

Chavez added that in her research of this report, she had found an opinion from a scientist at the CATO Institute which offered that what should be science is ideology driven, and has to do with the government power regarding science. As an example, he suggested that numerous government grants expect certain results, and those expectations drive academia to sign onto and perpetuate those ideologies.

Closing her comments, Chavez noted that Wyoming Farm Bureau has recently voted to support, but watch, the Clean Meat technology.

“It’s for us to decide what stance to take, but for me, ignoring these issues is not an option,” she concluded.

Report realities

Beef production, including animal feed, is responsible for 3.3 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, dramatically lower than the often mis-applied global livestock figure of 145 percent. (Agricultural Systems, journal).

Per pound of beef carcass weight, cattle consume 2.6 pounds of grain, compared to feed conversion efficiencies of pork and poultry.

Nearly 90 percent of grain-finished cattle feed is inedible to humans. These plants can only provide value to humans when they are up-cycled by cattle into high-quality protein.

Corn used to feed beef cattle represents only approximately 9 percent of harvested U.S. corn grain, or 8 million acres. Fuel production consumes 37.5 percent of the U.S. crop.