



**AUSTRALIAN BRANDED  
BEEF ASSOCIATION**

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The Secretary,  
The Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and  
Transport,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra.

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are very pleased to have the opportunity to make a submission to  
the Committee Inquiry into Meat Marketing.

The Australian Branded Beef Association (ABBA) was formed in 2002  
to promote the interests of organisations producing beef products  
identified by distinctive branding, and being the result of a documented  
producer to consumer supply chain.

The Members are committed to providing beef consumers with  
guaranteed eating quality beef products whose production is  
underpinned by the use of Meat Standards Australia (MSA)  
technology, as opposed to commodity trading beef.

Currently the Members of the Association are:-

Certified Australian Angus Beef Pty Ltd  
Coorong Angus Beef  
Hereford Prime  
Patchawarra Free Range Beef  
Riverine Premium Beef

There are a number of issues we would like to submit for the  
committee's consideration, and we set out below our views on these  
various issues.

Misrepresentation has long been a problem in the meat industry and  
we refer to such things as the consumer confusion caused by the  
inability to differentiate between prime beef and cow beef, the  
description of imported pork attached to Australian pork bone as  
"Australian" product, the common use of breed names to describe  
beef, sheep meat and pork; however many items carrying a breed  
name are not product of that particular breed.

In addition marketing claims and terminology such as "Tender"  
"Natural" "Free Range" etc with no technical or scientific support or  
accepted definition, even "Organic" can be included in this category  
although there are a number of organisations "certifying" organic  
products.

In terms of organic certification, we strongly support the requirement for a national organic symbol to be applied only to products certified by AQIS approved certification agencies. A successful example of this is the USDA Organic Seal. Australia lags behind most of our high value export markets in this regard.

Regional claims are another major concern with some beef items purporting to come from particular regional areas in the country whereas, in reality, they have originated elsewhere. In addition it has become a practice to ascribe the region of process to a beef product and not the region of production of the cattle.

These practices are deceptive and misleading to consumers and we believe that Aus-Meat Limited should be tasked with ensuring that beef products claiming regionality should have a documented, auditable program that demonstrates the efficacy of the claim.

Australia is a producer of healthy, safe, disease free meat and consumers are entitled to be unequivocally fully informed about the content of meat and meat products they are buying.

There should not be any room to avoid the facts by using terms such as “Made from Australian and Imported etc etc.....”.

If products are made from a mixture of Australian and imported raw materials the consumer is entitled to know the facts and it should be mandatory for labelling to state the relevant percentages of domestic and imported raw material and country or countries of origin of imported raw material.

Similarly euphemisms such as “Budget” to describe cow beef should not be allowed. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with cow beef or bull beef; however in both cases they are a different eating quality to steer/ heifer beef and consumers are entitled to know exactly what they are consuming.

The use of the term “Budget” to describe cow beef has been accepted practice approved by Aus-Meat Limited; however we believe that modern practice should accurately describe meat products and misleading descriptors should no longer be used.

Furthermore a trend is developing to refer to meat products as Certified without the back up of a recognised certification process.

We suggest that the use of the word “Certified” implies that any product carrying this claim has been subject to compliance against a rigorously enforced set of criteria imposed by a competent third party. We believe that in the case of meat products any such “Certification” process should have the imprimatur of Aus-Meat Limited and AQIS.

Research indicates that the word “Certified” is understood by consumers to indicate that a meat product identified using that claim has been subject to a rigorous, transparent process, subject to audit, that delivers on the claims of the “Certification”.

In recent years a number of beef products have appeared in the market place using breed names such as Angus, Wagyu, Hereford etc.

Each of these, and other breeds, have eating quality characteristics that set them apart from each other and therefore create expectations for consumers.

Therefore we assert that claims of meat products consisting of being specific breeds should in fact consist of predominantly the described breed, otherwise consumers are being deceived and misled.

To redress these problems we propose that legislation should be strengthened to ensure that labeling is in accordance with approved and agreed definitions and descriptors, and the use of misleading descriptors such as “Budget” should be prohibited.

In respect of some of our other concerns we believe that Aus-Meat Limited is the appropriate body to develop definitions and descriptors for all terminology to be used in describing and marketing meat products, including organic.

Aus-Meat Limited should consult with both Industry and Consumers in developing definitions and descriptors and should be given appropriate authority to enforce their use in the market place.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission should also be tasked with ensuring that correct terminology is used when defining and describing meat products for consumers, and ensuring that meat products comply with their marketing claims.

Regarding the indiscriminate use of “Certified” we believe this claim should only be allowed to be used provided:-

- The product is the result of a documented and transparent process that clearly sets out the process that guarantees delivery against the certification statements.
- A Certification statement should be publicly available setting out all the certification claims.
- The process should be overseen and audited by an independent third party approved by Aus-Meat Limited and AQIS.

Aus-Meat Limited should be tasked with ensuring that all meat products described as being “Certified” comply with a formal, documented, transparent certification process administered by a recognised third party and that the product meets the terms of the Certification claim.

Beef products claiming to be derived from specific breeds are becoming an important part of beef marketing in Australia and our export markets. We believe that it is critical for the credibility of the industry that these claims are correct and can stand up to scrutiny. We propose that any beef product claiming to be derived from a particular breed should be genotypically a minimum of 50% the claimed breed.

In applying a certification claim to a beef product that is described by breed that certification program should also have the imprimatur of the relevant Australian breed society.

We look forward to the opportunity of presenting these views to the Committee

Yours Faithfully,  
Australian Branded Beef Association.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Pointer". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Michael Pointer  
President

