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March 18, 2015

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This letter is response to the New York Times article regarding animal welfare practices at the Meat Animal Research Center at Clay Center, NE and Tom Vilsack's decision to place a moratorium on research at the center. Please feel free to read my comments at the hearing March 18, 2015 as I will be unable to join the discussion.

For over 50 years the Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) at Clay Center, NE has benefited the meat animal industry and the consumer by conducting meaningful and documentable research. The center and its scientists can be credited with improving the efficiency and quality of meat animal production from conception to consumption. One example is the on-going research documenting the benefits of cross-breeding in the beef cattle industry. MARC scientists have documented that mating animals of different breeds or developing hybrid composite cattle herds can improve production by 25% over purebred commercial cowherds. To put that in perspective, a hybrid cow has the ability to produce an additional 600 lb. of calf weaning weight over her lifetime which is mostly attributable to greater survivability of the calf at birth and ability of the cow to stay productive over a longer life span. This significant increase in productivity requires negligible difference in input, improves profitability, and benefits the environment with no negative consequences regarding animal welfare.

Numerous other research projects conducted at MARC have benefited the beef cattle industry, the consumer and the environment including the on-going and extensive genomics project conducted in collaboration with the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium. This project will ultimately identify genetics that will improve beef cattle feed efficiency as well as profitability for the producer. Any improvement in feed efficiency will result in a reduction in dependency on land, crops, water and other resources used in beef animal production. In addition, other research conducted at MARC has improved the quality and safety of beef available to the consumer at potentially less cost.

The author of the New York Times article was negligent in mentioning the quality and dedication of the other scientists employed at MARC, nor did he give credit to the significance of the work accomplished in the last 50 years at MARC. He only mentioned "profit" in the title of his article and implied that it was a bad. Placing a moratorium on research at MARC, based on an interview of an obviously disgruntled employee by a newspaper is inappropriate.

Sincerely,

Butch Schuler