

WHERE IS THE SWINE INDUSTRY HEADED
OR
"IT'S WHAT'S UP FRONT THAT COUNTS" WHEN RELATED TO WHAT?

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I once saw a go-go girl that was said to measure 50-32-38 and that was by tape not planimeter. She was said to have weighed about 200 pounds, at least enough to indicate that what was up front did count in weight as well as measure. With all of these statistics that caused her to be surrounded with fan-fare and publicity in those popular times of the go-go girl craze, you would have thought she would have established a longer lasting position of popularity in the entertainment field. However, today her remaining glory is identified only by bar room stories and openings for talks, because she couldn't change what was up front for her.

What's up front for the future of the pork industry can be evaluated with greater degree of validity if we take a few glances at our past ability to change and modify.

Thirty six years ago we produced about 77 million hogs and this year we will slaughter in the vicinity of 74 million. In 1940 there were 132 million people and today about 215 million people in this country. In 1940 the price of hogs averaged less than six dollars per hundred weight and this year they will average over \$40. In 1940 there were some 2 million farms raising hogs and today, even by most liberal accounting there are slightly over 500,000. In 1940 pork chops, ham and bacon averaged about 26 cents per pound and this year those same cuts will average about \$1.85 per pound. In 1940 our per capita consumption of lard was 14.6 pounds and this year it will be less than 4 pounds. And in 1939 I sold the second prize February boar at the Missouri State Fair for \$30 while this year even the second place animals in state sales bring 10 times that much.

In summary, one-fourth as many farms are producing pork for 63 percent more people, the pork being presented is one-fourth as fat and consumers are paying for the improvement.

During these past 36 years there have been type and composition changes effected in the swine population of this nation that are unmatched by any other species. Not only the degree of change has been profound, but the various directions that have been taken to create this change have caused the path of improvement to be much longer than the years. However no other species has unified its goal and pursued it with such one thought intent as has the pork industry. Some may see this as a detriment, but when you look at the overall industry improvement and the consumers' approval of the results the good certainly outweighs the bad.

During these 35 years there have been strong individuals that have stressed their beliefs and the industry followed them for varied periods of time. However, from the late fifties into the early seventies there seemed to be a greater unification of purpose among these leaders and that basically centered around the challenge of involving the carcass measurement and value in with the eye measurement and competitive value it possessed.

Today's seed stock and commercial pork producers, as well as those who research, guide and council with them should have a common goal of mutual economic soundness based on production of a product that pleases and attracts the investment of the consumer in this and other nations.

Following a recent visit to Japan, I find it doubtful that we can question their ability to produce an equal quality product, but due to economic and environmental restrictions created by limited land mass versus expanding population, pork production has limited promise in that and other like areas. It is an opportunity for increased demand for U.S. pork but with at least five other countries eyeing this potential market we must not be complacent in how we approach this growing market as we design the pig of the future.

There is said to be lack of coordination of thought, purpose and direction among those who profess to design the pig of the future. There have been designers of the pig of the future at work for the past 35 years. And thank God they were not all totally uniform in their ideals or goals or else we would not have variations with which to shape the mold today for tomorrow's pork producing animals.

The pig has been and I believe still is, one of the most resilient animals alive today. Despite our efforts to pull it, stretch it, widen it, narrow it or shorten it, the economics that suddenly arise to point out our mistakes or that we have gone too far, come early enough to prevent us from totally destroying past accomplishments at some base point.

Despite the lack of agreement in certain quarters today as to the type and dimension of breeding stock that must be molded in order to achieve that economical pork production for tomorrow, this is not at all bad, as long as everyone is fair and open-minded enough to recognize the negatives of their direction in the same light that they pursue the positives. It is also important that we realize that not everyone is starting at the same base point in their meat animal development and therefore should keep their speed of change in tune with their accomplishments of the day.

I believe that one of the great factors that goes unmentioned usually as we discuss the improvement of the swine industry in this nation, is the "freedom of movement" that has been accessible to the industry in past years. Unless great care and planning is instituted in the near future and coordinated by the federal government, we may find these coast to coast freeways of interchange closed to the freedoms of travel that has been available in the past.

It is impractical to expect well meaning state regulatory officials to enact and enforce regulations within their own states in such a manner that they become reciprocal across state lines, because their ability to enforce, stops at their state's borders. The longer that federal officials and departments sit back and plead lack of funds as their only reason for not establishing priorities and taking the boar by the tusk to set up uniform, practical and industry beneficial movement of swine in interstate movement, the longer we are going to have emotional, spur of the moment actions in the swine industry that deter from the good of the industry and its future as a red meat source.

By the same token, it is imperative that the swine industry establish a credibility factor that is second to none. Despite our lack of agreement with some of the regulatory over-kill actions that our industry must function within at present time, the best way to smooth the road to correction of these major deterrents to the industry's practical well being, is present day compliance for sound arguments tomorrow.

It is imperative that we look at each individual's problem today with the same intentness as if it was our own, and how if multiplied, could affect the swine industry in the future. The media is not only a very powerful tool to elect presidents, but is equally powerful on matters relating to the average consumer. The confusion that reigns today with the use of feed additives, antibiotics and the surveillance thereof is a today problem not one for tomorrow. It is imperative today that pork producers, their counselors and professional advisors assume that degree of liability for that which they prescribe that is not concurrent with present-day regulations, no matter how antique we consider the law that mandates certain actions.

Only through compliance and compatibility will pursuance of regulatory changes be accomplished. However, there is no reason for any pork producer to cringe into obscurity when confronted with regulatory challenge that has been made possible by out-dated laws. It is only through identification of these inequities when they occur that we are able to build sufficient evidence to have a sound presentation for removal or adjustment of the dimensions of the out-dated laws.

We must also keep in mind that the same technical know-how that permits us to look at the inner structure of a cell for progress also permits surveillance for that which is foreign to that cell. Even though some of the regulations under which our industry must function are as antiquated as the center jump in basketball, that doesn't permit us to set up our own boundaries for operation.

Today we have a structure within the swine industry that through efforts of thousands of pork producers, it has established sufficient credibility to work effectively in behalf of all pork producers. However, it has and will continue to be evaluated in like degree to its accomplishments.

Credibility is as fleeting in time of emotion as it is evasive to obtain. Only through united efforts toward mutual objectives will our goals be reached in the future. "What's up front" may be a classification for go-go girls, but "What's in front" may be of greater importance to pork producers as they meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Involvement, awareness and positive action combined with that powerful resilience of the pig to conform to our needs of the day will help turn those challenges into accomplishments.