



ALONG THE TRAIL

ACA Executive Vice President Billy Powell

Convention Speakers on Target – Good News

While listening to the wide array of outstanding speakers at this year's convention, I reflected back trying to remember my first state cattlemen's convention. I think it

was in the mid-1960s when Bubba Trotman was president. I would have been a student at Auburn University then and our family was expanding our cattle program. Daddy was active in the association and had served as Washington County President in 1958. I don't recall missing a convention since 1975 and over the years I've certainly benefited from the many great speakers and the abundance of information from the Trade Show. I have many wonderful memories of spending time with countless numbers of great people. How fortunate our association and cattle industry has been to have had such dedicated leaders over the years.

If you did not attend this year's convention, you missed some valuable information and a great opportunity for some good fellowship. There were first-rate speakers, a wealth of current information in the Trade Show, excellent meals, and some good news for the cattle industry. The convention's theme "Poised for Progress" was right on target as speaker after speaker talked about a bright outlook for the cattle industry.

It's the first time I can remember hearing speakers say that "the biggest challenge facing the beef cattle industry is to produce enough beef for the growing global demand". Wow! That's a real eye-opener. Now we just need more cows on our Alabama farms. This column has been an advocate for increasing the number of beef cows in the state for some time. However, our cowherd continues to decline. Nationally and in Alabama the cowherd is at a 60 year low. Thank goodness technology has allowed us to produce nearly twice a much beef per cow over the past six decades.

As we plan for next year's convention, I'd sure like to hear from those of you who did not attend. What can we do to earn your participation? We will be doing a survey soon and hope you respond and give us your thoughts. The work that goes into preparing for a convention is the same regardless of the number of attendees. A larger attendance would not only help attract sponsors and exhibitors, but will allow more people to benefit from the information shared by the nationally acclaimed speakers. After all, the convention is planned for you the member.

Feeding the Growing World Population

Experts estimate that by 2050 nearly twice as much food will be needed to feed the world's growing population. Folks, that's a huge increase in food production in less than 40 years.

I agree with Dr. Robert Fourdaire, chair of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture when he said that animal agriculture will have to play an even more important role in producing milk, meat and fiber for the world's population.

China and India are two countries where much of the population growth will occur. China will have more difficulty feeding itself in

the coming years as expanding demand, spurred by increased urbanization, strains resources. As more people move into cities and towns, the supply of farm products is limited by declining productivity of rural labor. China expects that by 2015, more than half of the country's population will be living in cities. The huge expansion in the middle class in China will open the door for more beef exports into this country. I'm glad that programs funded by your checkoff dollars are already at work in China on increasing beef demand.

And isn't it ironic that as the world population becomes more dependent on U.S. farmers to produce an increasing supply of food, that some in our society are working against the use of technology and animal production. This effort coupled with over reaching government regulations make farming more expensive and increasingly difficult. There is no way to produce the food needed without advancements in technology and the expanded use of animals for food production. Although backyard farming is good, we cannot feed the world by turning back the clock. The use of technology has been the reason we have enjoyed the safest and cheapest food supply in the history of mankind.

Prices Hit Record Highs; Outlook Bright for Cow-calf Producer

If you haven't sold any cattle lately you are in for a pleasant surprise. Go to www.bamabeef.org, scroll across the top to Industry Links" and then select "Market Prices." Then click on the box at the bottom of the page "Current Cattle Prices in Alabama" and select an auction market near you. This will show the prices of various classes of cattle sold last week.

Cull cow are selling for 60 – 80 cents per pound; cull bulls are selling in the 70 -80+ cent range and 450 – 500 pound feeder steers are bringing \$1.40 - \$1.50 cents per pound. This is good news; but we need this price to pay for our rising input costs. The dark cloud on the horizon – and it is getting blacker by the day with the trouble in the Middle East – is the price of oil. Most of the input costs on the farm are directly dependent on global oil prices- the oil price directly impacts what we pay for fuel, fertilizer and transportation.

Heavier Calves and More Fall born calves

We had an opportunity to visit with our good friend Tom Brink during the convention. Tom spoke here about a decade ago when he was an analyst with Cattle-Fax. Today he is responsible for the risk management on feedlots with capacity for nearly one million head of cattle. Folks, that requires many truck loads of feeder calves and corn.

Tom sees tremendous opportunity for producer's in Alabama and the southeast to help fill these feed yards with cattle. He said producers in Alabama had two major advantages over the rest of the country. One big advantage is fall born calves which could go to market when there is a shortage of feeders – June and July. The second advantage is our ability to graze calves over the winter. His company wants 700-800 pound calves ready to go right in the feed yard. Keeping calves until they reach these weights will add dollars to our pockets. We will be putting together a group of folks to work on these two areas that offer our producers a real advantage in cow-calf production. Watch for more on this subject.