

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

THE BEEF INDUSTRY IN TANZANIA

World's red meat production is led by beef followed by pork. Therefore beef supplies the most popular meat in people's diets. There is no way of evading the fact that people like meat, milk fish and eggs. The beef industry is also important for other reasons:-

- a) it provides a large range of by-products indispensable to the functioning of many essential industries such as the leather industry and animal feeds production;
- b) from the point of view of demand for beef it is one of the reliable exporting industries and, therefore, a definite foreign exchange earner for the nation; and foreign exchange is a critical factor in reviving the national economy.

The beef industry in advanced countries suffers intense competition from the swine enterprise, the lamb industry, and the poultry industry. Therefore beef promotion and research has to be organized under a Beef Board to make beef production more economical to keep up the battle. The Beef Board with a beef promotion committee undertakes industry information research on consumer and producer attitude about animal husbandry and environmental concerns and how these attitudes affect beef purchasing decisions.

Tanzania's Beef Industry:

Traditional Sector:

The traditional herd size of about 13.5 million cattle has been fairly stable because cattle numbers follow a cyclical rise and fall in a normal 10-year cattle cycle: because cattle production cannot be turned on and off like a spigot. Cattle numbers, like a huge battleship, simply take time to change directions. Consider the fact that it takes 4-5 years for a heifer to be conceived, mature give birth to a calf, which in turn reaches market weight.

Marketing Beef:

Market outlets for cattle include direct marketing to meat packers, dealers or other farmers; auction markets; terminal markets (selling by private treaty); livestock dealers; and electronic marketing (in advanced countries).

Meat Processing:

TPL's sophisticated meat products (and by-products) such as corned beef: FRAY BENTOS, LENNOX, BEEFEX, steak-and-kidney, steak-liver-and-tongue, beef sausages, and others, were foreign exchange earners when animal health programs were poorly understood or managed.

The Ministry of Agriculture (a Beef Board and the Veterinarian) should take full initiative to promote

Tanzania's beef industry because it has a critical contribution to the national economy and to agricultural development.

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Yours faithfully,

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