



“Homegrown Ontario Fresh Meat”: Ontario Red Meat Identity Strategy

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Background

This project is a partnership between Ontario Pork, Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency and Ontario Veal Association to develop a recognizable consumer identity for red meat in Ontario through a comprehensive, multi-year strategy.

This includes the development of a “Homegrown Ontario Fresh Meat” identity, as well as the promotion of that identity to Ontario consumers through media advertising, retail and public relations activities. The other main component of that strategy is market research to pre-test potential messages, test consumer recall of those messages and evaluate the success of the campaign regularly throughout its life span.

Foodland Ontario was initially approached to determine whether they would be willing to expand their well-established and respected program to include red meat. However, there was no interest to undertake such a strategy. So the three partner groups decided to determine the feasibility of working together to develop and launch such a project. Individually, none of the groups have the time, money or staff to execute a project of this magnitude, so it made sense to pool resources into a joint effort.

Research has shown that consumers think of red meat as a collective term, not as veal, sheep, pork etc., so it is important to talk to them in terms that they will understand. As well, all three groups face common issues:

- Export market opportunities far from stable and predictable
- A need to grow and protect domestic consumption in face of import competitors
- A need to continue to defend protein consumption and dispel health-risk myths across entire meat category
- A need to re-emphasize high Ontario standards in face of continuing concerns about food safety
- Previous industry/marketing board identity strategies have proven successful (Milk, Eggs, Maple Leaf’s ingredient story, California Raisins, Farm to Fork etc)

The Need for an Ontario Red Meat Identity: Market Research Results

The need for this strategy was clearly demonstrated by the results of consumer focus groups and telephone surveys carried out by Ipsos Reid on behalf of the partner groups.

This research demonstrated a strong opportunity to create an “Ontario” red meat identity in the marketplace, which will be consistent with other branded meats that have high consumer awareness and preference, eg. Alberta Beef, Black Angus Beef and New Zealand Spring Lamb.

It also showed that locally raised and produced products can form the basis of a significant point of differentiation for consumers, and help propel our respective industries forward.

Our individual product offerings are perceived as high quality, safe, and excellent across a number of other measured attributes, and the creation of the “Ontario” brand will help highlight those characteristics to consumers in this province. The notion of an “Ontario Seal of Approval” was well regarded amongst survey participants, presenting an opportunity for the three partner groups to build a full and complete story around the benefits of Ontario standards.

The collective view of the three livestock groups is that a consumer identity strategy would have considerable benefits to Ontario livestock groups, and could become a long term basis for product differentiation and a way of rallying consumers around the notion of choosing Ontario. Homegrown Ontario will offer smaller retailers, processors and abattoirs access to a branded program that they might not otherwise be able to develop, implement and sustain.

Logo Preference

The following concept logos were tested with consumers:



Out of these options, the following logo tested most positively:



Participants thought that the logo was attention getting/eye catching, gave the perception of freshness, and was simple and easy to understand. They also unanimously like the trillium. Respondents strongly preferred “Fresh Meat” to “Red Meat” in all groups, and they also preferred “Homegrown Ontario” to “Ontario’s Choice”. However, using “Fresh Meat” does restrict labeling to cuts, roasts and ground meats. The majority of respondents did not consider packaged sandwich meat, hot dogs or frozen/boxed meats to be fresh meat.

Project Description

The project will develop an “Ontario” identity for red meat, similar to what Foodland Ontario is to fruits and vegetables, and launch it on the Ontario market place in an effort to influence consumer preference. The aim is to offer consumers the opportunity to buy more Ontario red meat products, which will help grow domestic markets for red meat, a sector that is faced with increasing pressure from global competition and the threat of unstable export markets.

A consumer identity strategy has never been undertaken in Ontario for commodity meat products, only for specific products or programs, ie. Moist & Tender, Sterling Silver etc. However, this program is not intended to compete with or replace existing programs such as Ontario Certified Veal or Ontario Corn Fed Beef. These programs are based on producers fulfilling certain criteria, such as feed requirements or HACCP certification, and are designed to offer a specific marketing opportunity to producers who can meet such criteria. Homegrown Ontario will be developed to serve as an umbrella program for Ontario commodity meat that isn’t covered by an existing brand, while at the same time supporting the existing brands.

The following concepts form the backbone of the program’s key messages and concepts:

Choose Ontario:

- When you buy red meat products with the Ontario seal, you are not only helping local producers, you are buying the best our province has to offer. Every day local farmers work hard to produce the best for you and your family, so it is important to choose locally raised meat products. When you choose products with the Ontario seal, you are choosing a future for Ontario farmers.

Your Guarantee of the Best:

- When you see this Ontario seal on your meat package or in your butcher’s counter, you know you are getting the very best that our local producers have to offer. This seal means that you are choosing locally raised and produced Ontario red meat.

Ontario standards mean the best for you and your family, so look for this seal, to ensure you are choosing only Ontario raised and produced products.

Ontario Goodness Throughout:

- By choosing red meat products with the Ontario seal, you are guaranteeing goodness throughout. From high quality local production standards right to your table, this seal means goodness through and through. If you want the best local producers have to offer, look for the Ontario seal or ask your butcher.

Ontario Standards: World Class For You:

- Today, it is important to choose foods that live up to the highest quality standards of production. That's why when you choose red meats with the Ontario seal, you know you can rest assured that from farm, right to your table, the highest production and safety standards have been followed. The Ontario seal is your guarantee of the best production standards in the world.

Timelines & Funding

The project partners received CORD funding in 2005 to do some consumer research to establish the need for such a program, as well as develop a business plan. This is now in its final stages and the partners will be taking a full program proposal to the Adaptation Council for funding in early 2006. The intent is to develop and launch the program in 2006 for an initial period of three years, although the long term goal is for the program to be self-sustaining with more industry, and hopefully government, partners supporting it.