

USMEF-Heartland-2026-V2

SPEAKERS

Gordon Spronk, Dan Halstrom, John Herath, Travis Maddock

John Herath 00:00

Twenty four leaders and producers of beef, pork, corn, and soybean organizations from across the U.S. visited Japan as part of the U.S. Meat Export Federation's Heartland Team, including Travis Maddock of the North Dakota Beef Commission.

Travis Maddock 00:12

The Japan consumer is very much like the American consumer. They really value high-quality beef. Most of the beef that they harvest over here is wagyu or some type of beef like that, incredibly well marbled, and so they really do value the premium cuts that we send to them. Variety meats is a huge part. You know, the thing about the Japan consumer is they do use most of the carcass in some very unique and different ways, and part of that is a market for things like tongues that we might not have a big market for back in the U.S. but it's a premium market over here.

John Herath 00:41

The group visited retail and food service locations, a beef tongue processing facility, a culinary school, and a slaughter and processing facility with a wagyu auction in the heart of Tokyo. Gordon Spronk of the National Pork Board specifically sought out tonkatsu restaurants, a large user of U.S. pork loins.

Gordon Spronk 00:58

Because loins have a long history of being a drag on the cutout value, and so trying to understand how we increase that value and how we increase that demand for that specific product was one of the things that I was very interested in, specifically focused on coming here to understand. They appreciate our quality, they appreciate our consistency, and they appreciate the longevity of the relationship. In this culture, relationships take a long, long time to build trust. We've got over five decades of trust built, and now that's foundational to future sales and relationship in this market.

John Herath 01:33

While at one of the Tokyo grocery visits, USMEF President and CEO Dan Halstrom noted that Japan has passed a major milestone in U.S. red meat purchases.

Dan Halstrom 01:41

Yeah, here we are in Ito Yokado in Tokyo, and we have just surpassed the month of July of 2026 - surpassed \$100 billion in sales of U.S. beef and pork exports to Japan over a 50-year, our 50-year history. And one of the biggest movers is retail, which we're at today, so yeah, we're very excited about that milestone.

John Herath 02:04

For more, please visit USMEF.org. For the U.S.Meat Export Federation, I'm John Herath.