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Celebrating October Pork Month and 40 Years of Progress with Your Pork Checkoff

During October Pork Month, the National Pork Board (NPB) and Wisconsin Pork Association (WPA) are proud to recognize 40 years of progress for people, pigs and the planet thanks to the vision and support of producers through the Pork Checkoff.

In 1985, pork producers across the country came together with a shared vision: to create a more unified, forward-thinking pork industry. They voted to establish the Pork Checkoff to invest in their own future — to strengthen consumer trust, improve on-farm practices and ensure long-term sustainability. The legacy of producer leadership remains the foundation of the Pork Checkoff today.

“The original founders felt passionate about having an organization representing the industry and pork producers,” said National Pork Board President Gordon Spronk, DVM, a producer from Minnesota. “They aspired to an organization that was responsible for increasing demand for the benefit of everyone, and that remains the focus of the National Pork Board to this day.”

Producers led the development of some of the industry's most impactful programs, aligning with the Pork Act & Order mandate to support the industry with promotion, research and outreach. Through local efforts and state collaborations, producer voices have shaped initiatives like the Pork Quality Assurance® Plus (PQA Plus®) program. This began as a residue prevention program and evolved into a comprehensive focus on animal welfare, housing and transport.

“PQA Plus® and other industry training opportunities are great examples of how the Pork Checkoff responds to industry needs,” Spronk said. “Today we’ve also turned the page to be consumer-focused, focusing on meeting demands for safety, quality and flavor.”

Marketing efforts have evolved in the past 40 years to meet changing consumer habits. The latest campaign, **Taste What Pork Can Do™**, uses data-driven strategies to connect with younger generations through social media and digital spaces.

“This new campaign is modernizing how we look at pork,” WPA President AV Roth said. “Today’s consumers, specifically millennials and Gen Z, use pork differently so we are making pork resonate with them and their lifestyles.”

Spronk also emphasized the essential role of the 42 state pork associations. “The state associations are the grassroots connection for the entire industry,” he said. “They take the national message and efforts and bring them directly to producers and local consumers. That is where the story really connects — in our communities, at events and on our farms at the local level.”

One example of this is WPA's *Wisconsin Raised* program. This program connects local pig farmers and meat processors to consumers to source fresh, highest quality pork products. Programs like this bring assurance to consumers by closing the supply chain gap while providing stronger demand for pork in our local communities which keeps these local farms and businesses operating.

As the Pork Checkoff marks four decades of impact, its mission remains clear: to support producers who invest not only their resources but their time and leadership in driving the industry forward.

"We wouldn't be here today without the dedication and vision of our producers," said Brett Kaysen, senior vice president of producer and state engagement at NPB. "The Checkoff continues its commitment to keep producers' priorities front and center, as evident in the [recently approved three-year strategic plan](#) that focuses on long-term demand, swine health and empowering state associations and producers."

During October Pork Month, the Wisconsin Pork Association thanks all Wisconsin pig farmers and meat processors and encourages all consumers to support them and Taste What Pork Can Do™. Pork producers can stay up to date on how your Checkoff dollars are working for you by signing up for NPB emails at www.porkcheckoff.org/email. For recipes and to see the new brand in action, visit www.tastewhatporkcando.com.

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The mission of the Wisconsin Pork Association is to promote and protect the state's pork industry in order to ensure its success now and in the future.

1. Meat consumption. OECD data website. <https://data.oecd.org/agroutput/meat-consumption.htm>. Accessed March 25, 2024.
2. Ankersen, Lisbeth. (2024) Comprehensive Sensory and Flavor Nuances of Pork Protein and Fat. <https://www.porkcheckoff.org/research/comprehensive-sensory-and-flavor-nuances-of-pork-protein-and-fat/>
3. Agarwal S, Fulgoni VL 3rd. Association of Pork (All Pork, Fresh Pork and Processed Pork) Consumption with Nutrient Intakes and Adequacy in US Children (Age 2-18 Years) and Adults (Age 19+ Years): NHANES 2011-2018 Analysis. *Nutrients*. 2023 May 13;15(10):2293. doi: 10.3390/nu15102293. PMID: 37242176; PMCID: PMC10221550.