

QMS staff and stakeholder briefing

BBC One – Meat: A Threat To Our Planet?

Due for broadcast Monday 25 November 2019, 21:00

Summary

- Tonight (Monday 25 November) the BBC is broadcasting a documentary with the aim make more people aware of the environmental issues associated with the world's current food model, particularly outside of the UK
- It does not look at the health implications of eating red meat
- It is based on the idea that by 2050, the world's population would have swelled by so much that there won't be enough meat for everyone - so how do you feed x billion people who all eat red meat on a regular basis? Particularly where, in some cultures, red meat plays a bigger role in the diet
- In order to "try and find a solution", the documentary will explore how we can eat healthily (including red meat) in a sustainable way. It is **not the producers' intention for this to be 'anti-meat' in its tone**
- It will focus on **North American farming methods**, where they have good efficiency savings, but there is a trade off when it comes to the sustainability of the farming practices. It will not explore animal welfare
- Of note, the programme will include a study into how to reduce the amount of methane cows produce

Press Background

- In March 2019, the Weber Shandwick (WS) London (Ring Fenced Fund PR agency) was made aware of the production of a new BBC documentary, 'Meat: A Threat To Our Planet'
- Between March – April, the WS London contacted the producers on several occasions offering insight from Professor Nigel Scollan and John Gilliland, members of the Food Advisory Board. These offers were politely declined as much of the filming had already taken place in the US
- In November 2019, to coincide with the programme being scheduled, WS London reached out to a number of BBC News producers to identify if they were going to be doing on-air interviews to coincide with the broadcast. This resulted in Professor Nigel Scollan speaking to Polly Weeks, a producer for BBC Food who is focusing on 'Meat: A Threat to Our Planet' on Wednesday 20th
- Professor Scollan is now on the list of experts who could be called up for interviews should the news channel be interested in covering the programme
- It was agreed to not do any more proactive outreach on the show until after it has aired so as to not give it additional publicity
- We're expecting the BBC to publish a news piece in line with the show, and a number of TV journalists to write reviews after it has aired
- For info, AHDB has been approached about putting up someone for interview on Radio 4's You & Yours in a slot related to the show. This is currently being pursued.

Next Steps:

- QMS reactive statement for journalists who publish news articles post broadcast – see below.
- QMS has prepared social media posts/assets for use before, during and after the programme which we will tag your organisation into.

Comment from QMS:

Kate Rowell, Chair of Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), said: "When it comes to sustainability, the Scottish red meat industry is in stark contrast to intensive production methods which are used in other countries.

"We have an abundant, natural fresh water supply and produce quality beef and lamb from the grass and rough grazing which make up around 80 percent of Scotland's agricultural land which is not suitable for cereal, fruit or vegetable production. Scotland's grassland also acts as a carbon sink and grazing animals provide habitats for wildlife and help to maintain the landscape.

"Avoiding red meat could in fact be detrimental to health – for example 54% of teenage girls have iron intakes which are too low. Red meat is a natural source of protein, iron, zinc and B vitamins and we should continue to enjoy it in the knowledge that it plays a vital role in our diets.

"When consumers see the Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands in their supermarket or butcher's shop they can be assured that the meat they are buying has come from quality assured, sustainable Scottish farms where animal welfare and high production standards are a priority."

Background info and points worth highlighting

- ✓ The UK is one most of the most sustainable places in the world to produce red meat, our climate and geography means very few additional inputs are required to convert naturally occurring grass into high quality protein
- ✓ Over 90% of the nutritional needs of Scottish beef and sheep is met by grass or grass feed (silage), much of the rest is made up of crop bi-products or brewers' grains (bi-product of beer making), with minimal use of soya
- ✓ Out of the 15,0000 litres of water required to produce 1kg of beef, only 0.4% is blue (tap) water, 0.1% for sheep, the rest is rain that makes grass grow – and would do whether we produced meat or not.
- ✓ Over the past nine years, the UK has reduced beef production time by 5%, cattle efficiency through improved genetics and feed conversion is the main driver of this improved efficiency.
- ✓ The Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands are underpinned by world-renowned quality assurance schemes which cover the entire production process, including farms, hauliers, feed companies, auction markets and processors.

Carbon sequestration is not included in net GHG calculations for agriculture, but agriculture, particularly grazing livestock has a key part to play in maintaining and enhancing land that can and does sequester carbon. There is 1 million hectares of woodland on agricultural land in the UK. If managed effectively, this land could sequester 446 million tonnes of carbon dioxide over its lifetime. This is almost ten times the quoted GHG emissions for all agricultural in the UK each year, at 47 million tonnes. Practices to capture carbon improve soil health and structure reducing the use of chemical fertilisers (which emit nitrous oxide). Improved soil structure increases water holding capacity thus aiding flood defences.

The carbon footprint of UK beef is 35% lower than the global average and significantly lower than a number of the other key beef producing nations. In 2018 the UK imported around 32 thousand tonnes of beef from Latin America, the emissions from this beef, as opposed to UK, is an additional 2.3 million tonnes of carbon equivalent per year.

Diets that rely on plant-based proteins tend to consume more imported foods with substantial food miles, or foods grown out of season which rely on more resource inputs. (Worth noting here that the quoted carbon footprint of foods doesn't take transportation into consideration). With the global population expected to rise to almost 10 billion by 2050, it is critical the global agricultural industry makes best use of the finite resources available to produce enough food to feed and nourish 10 billion people. Grazing animals that turn waste products inedible to humans and naturally growing grass into one of the most nutrient dense foods available will play an integral part of the food growing industry. It will be places such as the UK where it much more sustainable that beef and sheep production will be required and necessary. It is most likely the world will return to local seasonal diets in order to sustain a population of 10 billion.

For more information

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