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INDUSTRY

Beef: It really does do a body good

By **Suzanne B.Bopp** September 29, 2014 | 6:46 am EDT

What should we eat? It seems like the experts' dietary advice is always changing, thanks to the incremental nature of scientific progress. But the latest results, in both nutritional research and animal-science research, provide lots of good news for the beef industry.

What's not news is that beef is an excellent source of high-quality protein – of course, that's been known for some time – or that it contains all the essential amino acids, while most plant proteins lack at least one. And beef also brings many other important nutrients to the plate: iron, zinc, B vitamins, choline.

"It's a nutrient-dense food relative to its caloric value," says Penny Kris-Etherton, a distinguished professor of nutrition at Penn State University. Nevertheless, many doctors and nutritionists in recent decades have advised cutting back on beef because of concerns about its saturated fat content.



Here's the news that may start to turn that around. First, some researchers are starting to question whether saturated fat is really the culprit driving obesity and heart disease. We're also finding out that lean beef doesn't actually contain that much saturated fat: A 3.5-ounce serving of lean beef only has 4.5 grams of saturated fat. (On a 2000-calorie diet, the daily recommendation for saturated fat is 13 grams.) Finally, new animal-science research is showing that there are approaches (genetic choices, feeding regimens) producers can use to change the nutritional profile of beef, making its future even healthier.

Changing view of saturated fat

The saturated fat research story has become very complicated in recent years. It's been vilified for decades, but now its reputation may be undergoing a rehabilitation. Research published last March in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine* did not find that people who ate higher levels of saturated fat had more heart disease than those who ate less. The lead author of the study, Rajiv Chowdhury, a cardiovascular epidemiologist at Cambridge University, told the *New York Times*, "My take on this would be that it's not saturated fat that we should worry about." A few months later, on June 23, 2014, *Time* magazine ran a cover story titled "Eat Butter," which argued that saturated fat is not really the enemy – carbohydrates and sugar are.

Scientists understand that the early saturated fat literature evolved from population-based research, which has many



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