



# Sustainability for the Future

three main areas: environmental, economic and social. For cattlemen, sustainability means proper land stewardship and ensuring a profitable operation for the next generation. Although for consumers, defining

sustainability has been linked to certain production systems.

Bruett warned against the mind-set that a niche program, such as organic or grass-fed beef, translates into sustainability.

“Sustainability is about outcomes, not processes,” Bruett said.

Cattlemen should keep in mind their own economic footprint in local communities, the way their management practices influence the natural

## ***JBS executive Cameron Bruett clarifies the buzzword as the capacity to endure.***

*Story & photo by*  
**JENA McRELL, digital editor**

With a global population predicted to eclipse 9 billion by 2050, there's never been a more urgent need for sustainable food systems.

Cameron Bruett, JBS USA head of corporate affairs and sustainability, explained that production efficiency will be necessary to supply protein for the world's growing middle class. Bruett was a featured speaker Jan. 27 during Cattlemen's College®, sponsored by Zoetis, hosted during the 2016 Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show in San Diego, Calif.

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time. It is our Green Revolution,” Bruett said. “It is going to take everyone, no matter what system you are in, to be more efficient and utilize the finite natural resources we've been blessed with in the most responsible manner possible, to try and feed all those people.”

He described the term sustainability as the capacity to endure, which includes

environment, and what they are doing today to build a profitable future for the generations yet to come.

“Don’t fear sustainability. Take it on in a way that’s meaningful for you and your operation,” Bruett said.

### **Perspective matters**

Achieving a sustainable future for the agriculture industry involves a number

of perspectives — from the ranch to the feedlot, and the processor to the retailer. Each stop along the way has different business objectives and challenges that influence the efficiency of food production. Yet quite possibly the most impactful voice is that of the consumer, Bruett explained.

A consumer’s view of agriculture production can seem more like a Norman

Rockwell painting, Bruett described, with an overly romanticized view of farming and ranching. Because of this disconnect, the industry has experienced unmerited consumer criticism of modern production practices. The technology has evolved, but the industry’s message of why it is important has not.

Bruett said that’s why anti-agriculture activists have such a stronghold on

consumer perceptions and policy in the United States. One of the greatest challenges facing the industry, he added, is that people who won’t consume a certain product are dictating the production terms, and a passionate vocal minority can generate power against large companies and the public.

“This trend that we see where we vilify our neighbor and say that my product is safer than yours or better for the planet than yours — this is false,” Bruett said. “We need to celebrate the diversity in American agriculture. We’re all going to have to work together.”

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Transparency with consumers will be key to overcoming these challenges, Bruett said. They need to be involved in what’s happening on the ranch in a genuine and honest way.

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In a growing digital world, social media is an excellent way to promote transparency in food production, even starting with individual farmers and ranchers sharing their stories online. Reaching out in local communities and inviting consumers to see a real-life farming operation is also an impactful way to inform and engage the public with agriculture, Bruett said.

While these efforts are focused way beyond the ranch borders, they are central to providing a sustainable future for the agriculture industry. Bruett encouraged the audience to think about how sustainability already plays a role in their cattle operations and how they can better express that positive narrative with those around them. Every conversation along the way could leave a footprint in the future global beef supply.



**Editor’s Note:** *This article was written as part of Angus Media’s coverage of the 2016 Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show, which is available in the Newsroom at [www.4cattlemen.com](http://www.4cattlemen.com).*