



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Agricultural  
Marketing  
Service

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**FROM:** Martin E. O'Connor  
Chief  
Standards, Analysis, and Technology Branch

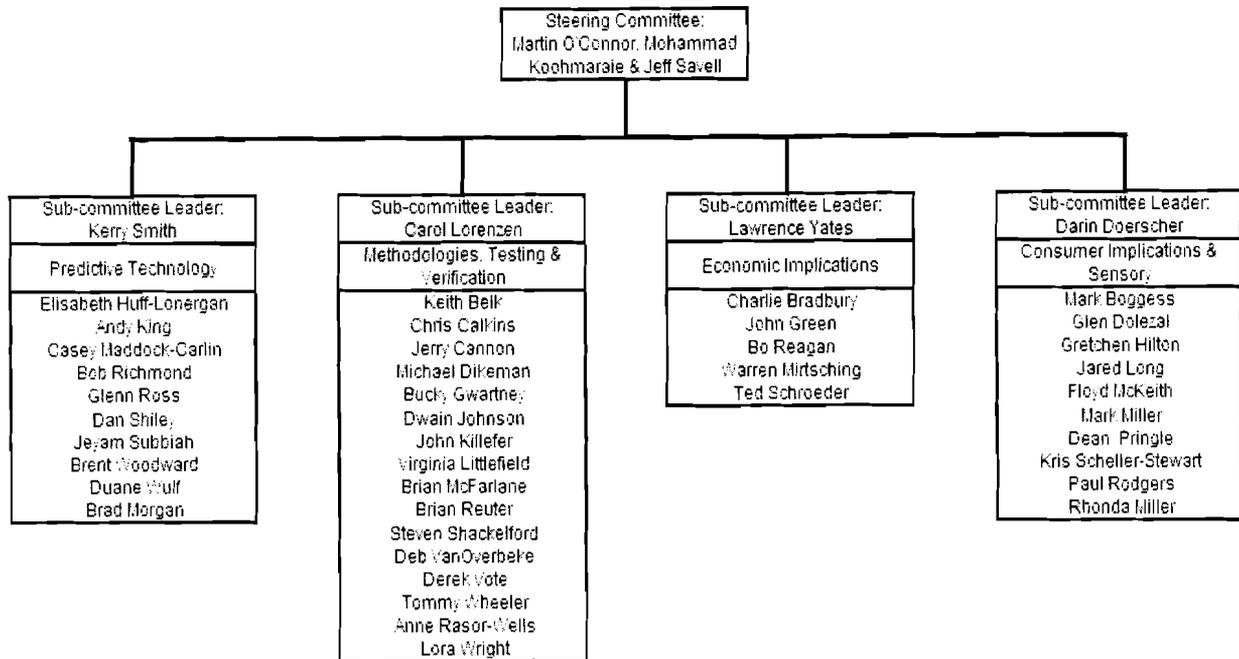
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin E. O'Connor".

**DATE:** November 16, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Meat Tenderness Claim Standard Development Update

On July 27, 2007, the Meat Tenderness Claim Standard Development Steering Committee sent out correspondence summarizing the March 2007 Meat Tenderness Forum. Also discussed were the necessary steps to move this initiative forward. The primary step was to define objectives and accountabilities for each of the sub-committees formed so that the complexities of Meat Tenderness are appropriately researched. As you recall, these sub-committees are: Predictive Technology, Methodologies, Testing, & Verification, Economic Implications and Consumer Implications & Sensory. Each of you has offered your time and resources to serve within one of these groups so that AMS can expeditiously generate a Meat Tenderness Claim Standard that will serve the entire Meat Industry.

The sub-committee members and their group's respective objectives and accountabilities are as follows:



### Predictive Technology

- To determine what ante-mortem practices and technologies are available to predict tenderness.
- To determine what post-mortem practices and technologies should/should not be considered in manufacturing a product under a tenderness claim.
- Upstream prediction.

### Methodologies, Testing & Verification

- To determine what methodologies/instrumentation are accepted by all stakeholders.
- To set the performance criteria for instrument performance in the field.
- To determine verification activities associated with a tenderness claim.

### Economic Implications

- To determine the economics of a tenderness-based beef marketing system.
- Determine the implications (pros and cons) at all points of the food chain (pasture to plate).

## Consumer Implications & Sensory

- To determine what attributes of palatability are most important (consumer perspective).
- To determine what the typical consumer's perception is of "tender meat."

Coupled with these outlined parameters, the steering committee is asking all participants to review the following general questions to confirm the overall direction of this initiative.

1. How do we define tenderness? Are we really trying to define palatability? What is the goal?
2. Should the tenderness threshold be the same for all species? If not, how do we segregate?
3. Will tenderness evaluation be objective (every carcass with the claim must be evaluated) or will it be a total quality management system (only a portion of the carcasses will be evaluated)?
4. Will a tenderness claim apply to the entire carcass or only the middle meats?
5. What is the best method to evaluate tenderness? Can methods other than the "best" be used?
6. Is an "improvement" in tenderness relevant to this standard?

In late December/early January, your respective sub-committee leader will be contacting you via email to set up a group conference call. Please use this opportunity to discuss these questions and the specific objectives/accountabilities for your group. The idea is to align all participants toward the common goal while stimulating more specific dialog within each sub-committee. Filtering this specific dialog to the steering committee will give them the resources they need to draft a successful standard. This process is likely to reoccur numerous times, so I would suggest that each group set up regular meeting times.

Feel free contact me at 202-720-4486 or [martin.oconnor@usda.gov](mailto:martin.oconnor@usda.gov) if you have any questions. You continued support with this initiative is appreciated.

cc: Darin Doerscher, Mohammad Koohmaraie, Carol Lorenzen, Jeff Savell, William Sessions, Kerry Smith and Lawrence Yates