

Fox News slams grass-fed beef industry

Industry leader says Stossel's big soapbox doesn't make him right

by *Sustainable Food News*

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John Stossel, host of "Stossel" on the Fox Business Network, is airing a segment Thursday night that describes the health and environmental benefits of grass-fed beef as a "food myth."

Stossel relies on "food experts" like the organic food industry's arch nemesis, Alex Avery, of the Hudson Institute, who said microscopic pesticide residues don't harm anyone.

"In fact, they help reduce carbon emissions, something environmentalists should support," Stossel wrote in his syndicated column this week.

And Washington State University's Jude Capper, who believes - based on carbon footprints - grass-fed is far worse than corn-fed.

Stossel also attacked the American Grassfed Association (AGA) for being "wrong" about the group's belief that grass-fed cattle "are better for the environment because harmony is created between the land and the animals." The segment - titled 'Is "natural" better?' - airs on Fox Thursdays at 9 p.m. and midnight, Saturdays at 9 p.m. and midnight, and Sunday at 9 p.m. (all times eastern).

"So the next time you reach for that package of beef in the grocery store tagged with all the latest grass-fed, free-range lingo, remember: Not only does it often cost twice as much, but there's no evidence it's better for the environment or better for you," Stossel wrote in his weekly column. "It's just another food myth."

Will Harris, the owner of White Oak Pastures, Inc., Georgia's largest grass-fed beef producer, told **Sustainable Food News** in an email that his customers are smart enough to figure out what's good for them and the environment.

"My customers are sophisticated people who have invested a great deal of effort into understanding the differences in the way that grass-fed beef is produced, as compared to the way that industrial beef is produced," Harris said.

White Oak, based in Bluffton, Ga., has the largest USDA-certified organic farm in the state.

Harris said his customers have strong opinions regarding the impact that the two production systems have on the welfare of the animals, the stewardship of the land, air and water, and the economics that have resulted in the country's current centralized food production system.

"I respect Mr. Stossel's opinion, but the fact that he has a good platform from which to speak does not make him

right,” said Harris. “There are plenty of researchers out there, and there is plenty of research to demonstrate just about anything that a person wants demonstrated.”

White Oak Pastures is one of only two on-farm, USDA-inspected grass-fed beef plants in the country.

All White Oak Pastures cattle are raised under two sustainability standards: the Animal Welfare Approved (AWA) program, which is a free certification for farms raising their animals with high welfare standards, outdoors on pasture or range, and a standard developed in 2008 by the American Grassfed Association (AGA), which represents more than 300 grass-fed livestock producers.

The AGA standards are primarily based on four precepts: total forage diet, no feedlots, no antibiotics and no added hormones.

The AGA grass-fed claim applies to ruminants only – cattle, sheep and eventually goats – not poultry or pork. The AWA audits AGA members' grass-fed meat operations. AGA members who adhere to both the AWA and AGA standards are able to use both American Grassfed Association and Animal Welfare Approved labels on their products.

The annual audits are provided to the farms at no cost, and, additionally, farmers bearing the seals are provided free technical advice and marketing support.