



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **NMA CEO SAYS USDA PROVIDES PRICING TRANSPARENCY**

OAKLAND, CA – NMA CEO Barry Carpenter participated today in the first panel, Industry Dynamics from Farm to Consumers, at the Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Margins Workshop in Washington, DC.

Carpenter was one of six presenters at the opening session, chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Attorney General Eric Holder. Other panels will speak to Margins in the Dairy Industry, Issues in Food Retailing, and Margins in the Livestock & Poultry Industries. As with prior workshops, there will be opportunity for public input.

The panelists were asked focused questions. In his responses, Carpenter countered suggestions by one of the panelists that there is no transparency on price information by pointing out that price information is very readily available, every hour of the day, on USDA's website as a result of the Mandatory Price Reporting law that has been in place since 2001. The system is totally transparent, and there are no "secrets" on price information.

Carpenter also said that there is limited value in year-to-year price spread comparisons because of changing regulatory burdens such as food safety costs, product changes such as closely trimmed further processed products, and other input expenses. Today's price spreads have little in common with those of twenty years ago, and indeed vary as a result of many changing dynamics in the livestock and meat market, including supply and demand.

Carpenter stressed the value and importance of the relationship between producers, slaughterer/processors and consumers. "Today, two-thirds of the beef and pork packages available in retail cases are branded or identified back to the producer, and the trend is continuing. This is in stark contrast to 30 years ago, when most meat was marketed as a commodity item," said Carpenter.

USDA did not provide a webcast, but has said that it will provide a video and transcript at a later date.

National Meat Association is a non-profit trade association. Since 1946, NMA has represented meat packers and processors, equipment manufacturers and food suppliers who provide services to the meat industry. The association has members throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, Australia and Mexico.