

# **Statement of the North American Bison Industry**

*Developed by the Commercial Marketers of the National Bison Association and the Canadian Bison Association*

Barely more than a century ago, the North American Bison teetered on the precipice of extinction, with fewer than 1,000 animals left in existence. Today's bison herd is nearing half million, thanks in part to retailers and restaurants introducing the global consumers to the great taste, nutritional attributes, and rich story of bison.

The National Bison Association and Canadian Bison Association note that consumption of bison meat today plays a critical role in the conservation of the species. Strong demand for bison meat has helped spur the restoration of bison on the prairies and pastures of North America.

Demand began to outstrip available supply in 2009, creating significant challenges for our partners in the retail, restaurant, and distribution channels. The bison industry responded with a concerted campaign to encourage expansion of existing herds, and to attract new producers into our business.

Ranchers, processors and marketers want to supply the marketplace with every ounce of bison products requested by our customers. That's why we have launched Bison 1 Million, a coordinated effort among ranchers, First Nations, and conservationists to restore one million bison to North America.

Restoration on this scale is an ambitious goal and will take many years to accomplish. There are many factors that will determine the growth of our herds.

- Nature perfected bison over centuries to thrive in the ecosystem of our part of the world. This means that it takes time for bison producers to increase production to meet consumer demand. Natural bison production cycles and growth patterns are longer when compared to beef cattle. Furthermore, growth stimulants are not administered to bison to promote more rapid growth
- Even though bison processing has reached record levels, we are still a very small industry. The 60,000 head of bison processed in North America last year still represent less than one-half of a day's processing of cattle in the U.S.
- Bison will continue to be a premium protein product. The very nature of the animal and the production protocols of our industry create a quality, nutritious product that is sustainably raised and humanely harvested.

Our associations today continue to work on responsibly growing the herds of bison across North America by reaching out to producers who are in search of agricultural business opportunities that are profitable and provide a rural lifestyle. We are sharing information on bison production through presentations, our electronic newsletter, Smoke Signals and social media. We are reaching to lenders, and sharing information with educational institutions and other stakeholders about our plans.

We know that keeping supply and demand in relative balance is challenging. That is why our associations, and the individual ranchers and marketers we represent, are dedicated to working directly with our customers to continue to build the demand for the meat, create profitable businesses for farmers and ranchers and encouraging investment for growth.

We are proud to be partners with consumers, retailers, and foodservice operators. We value that partnership and invite your thoughts and suggestions as we move forward to continue building a market—and rebuilding a species—based upon adherence to uncompromising principles.