



Considering USDA Checkoff Programs for A Stronger Market Position

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Mission: The Endowment collaborates with public and private sector partners to advance **systemic, transformative, and sustainable** change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities.



We are a not-for-profit public charity established in 2006 at the request of the U.S. and Canadian governments in accordance with the Softwood Lumber Agreement.



We promote forest retention and forest health and seek to revitalize forest-rich communities.



We believe people value what they use. Using forest services and products—wood, paper, water, carbon, recreation—incentivizes forest retention and health.

OUR IMPACT AREAS

FORESTS

Support working forests and the use of sustainable forest management practices for the health and retention of U.S. forests

COMMUNITIES

Work with trusted partners within rural forest-reliant communities to build economic prosperity and resilience

MARKETS

Support forest industry processes and products, both traditional (e.g., paper mills, sawmills) and emerging (e.g., biochar, carbon)



USDA Checkoff Programs

USDA Checkoff Programs are **producer-funded initiatives** aimed at promoting and researching specific agricultural commodities without direct government funding.

- **Purpose:**
 - Increase demand for agricultural products.
 - Enhance market competitiveness.
 - Educate consumers about the value of these products.
- **Administered By:**
 - Overseen by the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).
 - Managed by commodity-specific boards.



How Do Checkoff Programs Work?

Producers pay a fee per unit of product sold (e.g., per pound, ton, board feet. etc).

- **Programs:** Currently 21 active programs, ranging from beef, pork, honey, Christmas trees, Paper and Packaging, Softwood Lumber, Watermelons
- **Benefits:**
 - Funds research and market development
 - Increases visibility and competitiveness of an industry WITHOUT violating antitrust

Establishing Checkoff Programs

1. Industry Proposal

Stakeholders within the commodity industry (producers, processors, handlers, etc.) identify the need for a checkoff program and prepare a formal proposal. This includes defining goals, funding mechanisms, and governance structures.

2. USDA Review

The proposal is submitted to the USDA for review to ensure it aligns with federal laws and serves the commodity's broader interests.

3. Public Input

The USDA publishes the proposed program in the Federal Register, allowing for public comment. Stakeholders can share their opinions, concerns, or support for the proposal.

4. Referendum

Once comments are considered, the USDA conducts a referendum among eligible industry participants (e.g., producers, importers). A majority must approve the program, typically by either number of participants or volume of production represented.

5. Implementation

If approved, the program is formally established. A board is appointed (usually made up of industry representatives) to manage operations, including collecting assessments and implementing promotion, research, and education activities.

6. Ongoing Oversight

The USDA oversees the program to ensure compliance with regulations and evaluates its effectiveness through periodic audits and reviews.

Value of Checkoff Programs

Increased
Demand

Support for
Sustainability

Research and
Innovation

Market
Diversification

Industry
Collaboration

Return on
Investment

How the Endowment Can Help



1. CONVENING SUPPORT



2. EXPERIENCE-PAPER AND PULP,
SOFTWOOD LUMBER, PELLETS,
AND HARDWOOD LUMBER



3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT



4. CO-CREATING A PLAN AND
PROCESS



Thank you!

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