

**APPENDIX E**

**A HISTORY OF ASA'S LONG RANGE PLAN**

**2004  
Updated in 2007**

**Written by Dr. Jerry Lipsey  
with Contributions from ASA Staff**

## **A History of ASA's Long Range Plan**

**ASA's Mission Statement:** *The success of the American Simmental Association is dependent on the success of our members. In turn, our members' success is dependent on their cattle making an important and significant contribution to the beef industry. The highest priority is to maintain and nurture services and products, which bring value to ASA's members' customers.*

**It was an amazing start:** Simmental cattle from Europe brought amazing traits and excitement to the U.S. cattle industry. Few had ever seen or heard of cattle with the kind of growth, muscling, milk and fertility these imports offered. Excitement was accelerated when the American Simmental Association (ASA) was established in 1968.

The leaders were committed to no-nonsense production. Until the 1960s, many breeds spent more resources on social and self-promotional projects than strategies to produce and improve genetics that brought value to the cowherds, feed yards, packing plants and consumers of our nation. It seemed clear that Simmental genetics combined with the goals and plans of ASA would change our industry.

They did. The seedstock businesses got serious about data basing performance records. The science of beef cattle genetic evaluation exploded and everyone was discussing how to use measurements of genetic differences to quickly accelerate progress and market more value to their customers. Without doubt, Simmental cattle and the ASA forever changed the beef cattle seedstock industry, but ASA's future was not assured.

The demand for Simmental genetics was so *intense* that even halfblood cattle brought remarkable prices. At times, our cattle sold so well, there was little question that they improved profits of the beef industry; our intuition said they had to and people invested huge prices assuming they would also enjoy similar sale prices.

Buying and selling Simmental soon became as much an investor (millionaires, pro-athletes and movie stars) focused business, as it was a genetic production business. It's easy to be a "Monday morning quarterback", but the members of the Association often spent more time developing and marketing member pleasing cattle, sales and advertising program than attending to downstream customer value genetics, which would decide the future success of both breeds and breeders.

**The American Simmental Association began to falter:** By the late 1980s, these consequences nearly brought the Association to its knees. The U.S. beef industry was beginning to question the value of Simmental genetics compared to other breeds that had already begun proving and improving important economic traits. Tensions arose among the membership, and self-interest groups fought for resources, promotion and

advocacy of their interests. The rest of the beef industry didn't care, and while we were distracted, other seedstock organizations increased downstream demand for their cattle.

To the credit of many courageous and gracious members and elected ASA Board Members, numerous projects/programs were initiated to concurrently improve the perception and real industry value of SimGenetics. Problems of the past began to fade with a new vision of how Simmental genetics could again attract all segments of the industry and bring success back to our membership. *The key was to believe that making our members' customers successful will in turn, create opportunities for ASA members.* Successful members, stabilized by demand from all segments of our beef industry are the key to growing the American Simmental Association.

**In the recent decade, ASA Leadership have established the following as leverage points for building beef industry demand for SimGenetics:**

**A. Position Simmental as the best maternal Continental breed.**

**B. Use ASA's open herdbook Rules and By-Laws to both expand genetic material available for up-grading Simmental and develop composite seedstock most perfectly fitting our customers' needs now and in the future.**

**C. Develop programs that the beef industry recognizes as substantiation of value for specific member interests.**

#### **Positioning Simmental as the Best Maternal Continental Breed**

All cattle producers recognize Simmental as heavy milking, muscular, large, rapid growing cattle. Simmental halfblood females are among the best crossbreds, and feed yards and packers have always bragged on their steered brothers, especially when combined with British-blood. Numerous research institutions have noted that British x Continental crossbreds often optimize production enterprises, especially when end product value is considered. However, many pointed out the challenges of calving ease, cow maintenance costs and carcass performance resulting from buying Purebred or Fullblood Simmental bulls.

In the recent decade, the following programs/projects have been established by the ASA to define Simmental as the Best Maternal Continental Breed:

**Refined the largest and most tested Multibreed Genetic Evaluation**

**The largest Carcass Merit Sire Evaluation Program**

**Sire Evaluation Heifer Calving Program**

**Cow-Inventory Based Enrollment Systems**

**Genetic Evaluation for Economic Value**

**Largest sire testing for feed intake and efficiency**

No one questions the ability of Simmental-influenced cows to wean big, soggy calves, so why have we been challenged

getting genetics into commercial cowherds?

The three most common replies are problems with dystocia, problems getting two and three-year-old Simmental-influenced females bred back, and balancing the cost of keeping big, heavy milking cows vs. the value of their feeder or fed steer progeny. Foremost, calving ease concerns limited our future, especially in small herds.

*Almost one-half of all cows in the U.S. are exposed to a single herd bull. These small herds (75% of all U.S. herds own 50% of all cows) mate the yearling heifers to the same bull that breeds the mature cows. For all the strong and valuable production traits brought by the European Simmental, calving ease was quickly discovered to not be one of them. Thousands of herds experienced problems calving heifers and cows to Simmental bulls.*

It wasn't that Simmental breeders didn't know or understand these challenges. Our members responded with unprecedented selection that created one of the fastest improving genetic trends for calving ease ever documented in history. However, becoming the easiest calving Continental breed wasn't nearly enough proof for American cattle producers to prefer Simmental bulls. We had to prove Simmental bulls could be bred to Angus-sired yearling heifers.

Angus cattle have made so much progress that Angus bulls dominate the market. Today, more replacement heifers are Angus-sired than any other seedstock source. We have learned that Simmental must become more than the Best Maternal Continental breed, Simmental must provide calving ease genetics that work on Angus-sired heifers. Remember, three fourths of all U.S. cowherds breed all females to one bull; therefore more ASA members must produce bulls that fit an Angus heifer calving ease requirement.

Because of the heifers that calve in our large Carcass Merit Program, we now know that bulls in the ASA database with CE EPDs equal to or better than 10 work well on Angus-sired heifers. CE 10 is a reasonable requirement for commercial cattle producers interested in using Simmental bulls on heifers; however, ASA's Carcass merit Program has also impacted demand for our bulls. For decades, producers did not include post weaning growth and carcass value as maternal traits; however, we were quickly learning that product value (feeder cattle, fed cattle and carcasses) had now become a factor of cowherd economic success.

Since a long-term priority was established to develop Simmental as the Best Maternal Continental, what role could carcass evaluation play? It's a cost of production issue (actually a value of production issue).

Ease of production and value of production are becoming bigger and bigger issues to cattle producers. Beginning in the early 1990s, feeder and fed cattle markets began to respond to potential endproduct (carcass) value. Primary

issues were maximizing USDA Quality Grade Choice, and minimizing USDA Yield Grade 4s and 5s. High percentage Simmental were discriminated for low marbling.

Since November 1996 when the sire evaluation carcass program was initiated, the beef industry has begun to regard Simmental X Angus fed cattle and carcasses as high-ranking, valuable products. Even though this is an endproduct-focused program, more and more commercial herds consider Simmental as a viable component of their crossbreeding and feeder cattle marketing plan. So, the ASA Carcass Merit Program impacts the interest in using Simmental genes on the cow-side of the production system.

Hybrid vigor simply plays a huge role in the biological success of cows. The positive impact of crossbreeding on fertility/longevity, and production traits is so well documented that straight-bred cows are almost a foolish investment. However, the problem of developing crossbred cows and maintaining functional percentages of contributing breeds, heterosis and biological uniformity in the cow is a challenge. For example, if 50% Angus, 50% Simmental cows optimize resources and profits, how can these percentages be sustained?

Of the 800,000 herds in this nation, approximately 600,000 small herds need only one herd sire. If the herd sire is a purebred, there is almost no chance of maintaining crossbred cows at 50% Angus and 50% Simmental.

On the other hand, crossbred (more commonly called composite) bulls are the only viable means of maintaining uniformity. After the initial crossbreeds are developed at 50% Angus and 50% Simmental, using SimAngus bulls maintains the optimal breed percentages. From both an output and cost of production standpoints, few profit-making decisions rival the importance of crossbreeding, but selection of the best individuals (almost entirely bulls) on EPD value is still critical.

Breed Associations have been very aggressive in measuring genetic differences and displaying them in the form of EPDs; however, we have been very slow to provide tools (economic tools) that best utilize the EPDs. The economic impact of choosing specific sires is critical; however, until recently, breed associations provided few parameters for economic guidance. These parameters, usually labeled Economic Indexes, have great potential for both seedstock and commercial producers to make decisions that affect enterprise profits.

Animal Scientists have known that the most effective means of utilizing EPDs is through the use of economic selection indexes. Economic selection indexes provide an estimate of an animal's economic value based on its EPD profile. The pig, poultry and dairy industries have employed them heavily and successfully for years.

In order to provide our members and their customers with better tools for selection, ASA developed the All Purpose Index (API) and Terminal Index (TI). These indexes use EPDs from the appropriate traits to measure the potential economic impact on typical production systems. In general animals that balance reproduction, growth and end product traits excel in these indexes, especially the API.

The future of genetic selection will be for profit, not just appealing EPDs and functional conformation. ASA is well positioned to offer this information and compete with other genetic suppliers.

Scientists from Cornell University, USDA, Cattle Fax, and the ASA Staff were instrumental in developing and fine-tuning ASA's multibreed evaluations and economic indexes; however, after more than two decades of contractual research with Cornell, ASA decided to conduct the genetic evaluation in Bozeman.

By 2006, ASA had the programming (code and software), computer hardware, and personnel in place to complete genetic evaluations. The Spring 2007 Sire Summary was the first completed in Bozeman in nearly 25 years. All of the "tools" needed to accurately complete multibreed genetic evaluations are now maintained at ASA Headquarters. The new innovations sure to be developed can be quickly implemented, tested and used to provide the best comparisons of genetic values. ASA joins the American Angus Association as the only beef cattle seedstock sources capable of conducting genetic evaluations without university support.

**Using ASA's open herdbook Rules and By-Laws to both expand genetic material available for up-grading Simmental, and develop composite seedstock most perfectly fitting our customers' needs now and in the future.**

Many of us knew that European Simmental combined amazing traits, but often the balance of these traits did not perfectly fit U.S. production methods. We quickly captured traits from other breed sources than improved our opportunities. Polled, eye, hair and teat pigment, heat and insect tolerance are just a few traits that helped SimGenetics gain value in the U.S. In all cases, it was dramatically quicker to access needed traits from other breeds than select for them within the Fullblood Simmental population.

The most efficient method to access Simmental genetics was importing European bulls. Of course, semen was used on females of all descriptions and ASA members generally envisioned continued use of semen from the European bulls or high percentage (fifteen sixteenths) U.S. or Canadian bulls termed Purebreds.

Breeding for a higher and higher percentage of Simmental blood was typical of most ASA members (even some commercial

herds); however, another breeding-management plan was evolving. Because the European Simmental did not offer exceptional calving ease, many ASA members bred their yearling heifers to Red Angus bulls. In many cases these Red Angus bulls were purebreds and our ASA members had their Red Angus registration certificates. Members routinely asked why halfbloods were only designated from Simmental Purebred or Fullblood sires. Didn't purebred bulls of other breeds sire halfbloods when bred to purebred Simmental dams?

Historically, all associations only registered animals sired by bulls "papered" in their breed (exceptions were the American Breeds including Simbrah that registered progeny of Brahman sires in order to develop five-eighths three-eighths blood "purebreds"). There were no arguments about the percentage blood of the offspring sired by Red Angus bulls, this was an issue of protecting the Simmental bull market, and the ASA Rules and By-laws did not allow bulls of other breeds to sire registered Simmental calves in the ASA Herdbook. However, ASA members continued to breed Red Angus and Angus bulls to yearling Simmental heifers. Surprisingly, concerns over proper genetic evaluation of Simbrah (and percentage Simbrah) helped open the door to a change in ASA Rules.

Obviously, to develop Simbrah, Brahman bulls were utilized. In terms of conducting genetic evaluations, scientists knew that Simbrah EPDs could be enhanced by accounting for both the genetic quality of the parents (Simmental and Brahman), and the impacts of direct and maternal heterosis in each animal. Databasing the pedigrees of Brahman and percentages of breeds in Simbrah allowed a better comparison of all animals in the Simbrah database. The concept of Multibreed Genetic Evaluation was developed and accepted at ASA!

Soon, it became clear that the Brahman-Simmental Complex of developing Simbrah had applications for "Americanizing" Simmental. If data basing and accounting for the impacts of additive and heterosis genetics was important in Simbrah, it was also important in percentage Simmental. These methods "leveled the playing field" among halfbloods, three-quarter-bloods, seven-eighths-bloods, purebreds and full bloods in terms of accessing their genetic values.

The development of ASA's Multibreed Genetic Evaluation had a huge impact on expanding bull and heifer contemporary groups to now include any percentage Simmental blood (or purebreds of other breeds for that matter). With the newly developed ability for multibreed genetic evaluation, ASA members could sample bulls of any breed that offered genetic value (polled, pigmented, calving ease, and marbling for examples) to their customers, and the ASA Board decided to ask the membership to approve an ASA Rule change allowing bulls of other breeds to sire calves in ASA's Herdbook.

The membership voted approval and ASA became the first Association to offer multibreed genetic evaluation and register calves sired by bulls first registered in other

associations. So, during the decade of the 90s, the American Simmental Association developed two powerful weapons that would allow members to compete for the future of seedstock production:

**Multibreed Genetic Evaluation  
Registering progeny of sires of other breeds**

These two factors had huge impacts on the success of our members. From a breeding-up standpoint, highly proven sires of other breeds can be utilized to product halfbloods. Often, these "new" halfbloods are utilized as foundation females for three quarter blood Simmental production. Somewhat ironically, the halfblood bull calves sired by bulls of other breeds became an overnight success as well.

Commercial cowherd owners were searching for percentage Simmental sires to stabilize the breed combinations of their cows. The primary demand is for Simmental x Angus bulls with at least 25% and no more than 75% of either breed. Many members report that their percentage bulls command higher sale prices than purebreds. In recent years, ASA has documented a large increase in registrations of percentage Simmental. The demand for these Simmental x Angus composites was so great that SimAngus was trademarked as an ASA labeled product.

**Developing programs that the beef industry recognizes as substantiation of value for specific member interests.**

The leadership of the American Simmental Association has put significant thought, effort and resources into programs that add value to members' cattle. The primary projects are supporting and funding:

State Associations  
Shows and Sales  
Junior Programs  
ASA Publications  
Field Staff'  
Advertising, Promotion and Industry Visibility

These are uncountable methods and reasons to compare value among seedstock other than just genetics. Health standards, proper nutritional status, useful age, and location are just a few. What things could and should a breed association do to add value together than genetic proofs?

Perhaps the first and most commonly thought of programs or activities of breed associations that add value to members' products are sales and shows. Even though the founding leaders of ASA were adamantly opposed to shows, Simmental and Simbrah exhibition events quickly took root. Similar to most (all?) other breeds, animals declared class winners and champions enjoyed increased market values, and often, the market was established by attaching a sale to each show

To downstream customers (commercial cowherds, feed yards and

packing plants) of seedstock producers, shows and sales didn't add much value, but these activities often created spectacular prices paid by other seedstock producers. ASA's By-laws allowed for the formation of state associations, which were critical to create opportunities to market SimGenetics. All shows were directed or supported by state associations; therefore, ASA's support of state associations certainly indirectly helped to develop and sustain shows.

In the first 10 years of ASA's existence, state sales, or regional sales (often attached to shows) were the only opportunity to commingle and auction large numbers of Simmental cattle. Many state associations organized and became very active. These state groups often became strong because successful sales developed substantial incomes for their treasuries. In coming years, many state associations struggled when ASA members developed herds large enough to host production sales vs. consigning to their state sales. Recognizing the value of state associations to members with small herds, ASA leaders decided to provide financial support for state associations.

The primary items of ASA support for state associations are:

- A. Cost-sharing advertising
- B. Cash payment on every new animal registered in each state
- C. Services from ASA Headquarters and Field Staff to support state association activities

These resources are often utilized in promoting shows and sales. ASA-sourced dollars have helped state associations maintain visibility, recruit members at the grassroots level, and fund junior activities. In part, it was junior activities that brought ASA closer to supporting shows. Simmental and later Simbrah became a "natural" choice for families with children involved in 4-H and FFA projects.

An open herdbook, widely available semen supplies, gentle dispositions, strong demand from neighborhood herds, and creative personal skill building competitions for kids attracted many parents to enroll their children in American Junior Simmental Association memberships. Memberships grew rapidly in the 1980s, and hundreds of AJSA members enjoyed exhibiting Simmental and Simbrah.

However, showing selection for more size, more growth, and greater leanness (showing priorities of the era) was hampering the popularity of SimGenetics. Certainly the two, most-quoted problems with Simmental, poor calving ease and carcass quality, were generally not improved by visual selection. The greatest opportunity to utilize the positive features of shows (educational dialog, and the selection for traits not encompassed in EPDs such as skeletal soundness, frame size and muscularity) was to incorporate EPDs into judges' information and hopefully their decisions.

By the early 1990s, the ASA Board established Progress

Through Performance (PTP) Shows that provided judges with EPDs. This innovation reduced the conflict among members who distained shows and allowed the ASA to provide greater support and service to both AJSA events and adult shows.

Today, staff data preparation, event attendance and service all support shows and add value to ASA members' cattle. Several reviews have been conducted to evaluate the impact of PTP Shows on both the members' and cattle industry's view of SimGenetics. In general, the responses have been positive and reinforced the Board to continue providing support and promotion.

Like other breed associations, ASA has spent millions of dollars advertising and promotion. Keith Evans, former Director of Communications at the American Angus Association said there are three reasons breed associations must advertise:

1. To convince downstream customers that our products are valuable
2. To recruit more members
3. To make our current members feel their association is adding value to their cattle

In the recent decade, ASA advertising has focused on downstream customers. Becoming the logical crossbreeding companion with Angus and Red Angus positions SimGenetics very well with cowherds, feed yards, and packers. Strengthening this position will create more success for our current members, recruit more members, and add value to nearly all members' cattle.

ASA's advertising has expanded beyond only purchasing hardcopy from popular periodicals. The two primary advances are support for increased *SimTalk* circulation, and development of a tradeshow booth. Both of these have seemingly increased the awareness of SimGenetics value to the entire beef industry. These efforts by Board Leaders have increased *SimTalk's* circulation by more than 400% in the recent decade.

It is doubtful that Simmental and Simbrah producers could have become successful without periodical publications. When ASA purchased *the Shield* from a private owner in the late 1980s, a very large infusion of dollars were required to initiate and sustain *the Register*, *American Simbrah* and *SimTalk*. Although ASA Publications, Inc. has been profitable for several years, the financial and human resources support from ASA is critical to our members. These communication tools have added immeasurable value to our members' cattle.

Certainly, the biggest change in ASA's publications is *SimTalk*. *SimTalk* began as a science and informational newsletter going to members and allied industries. It was routinely four to eight pages published two times per year. In the early 90s, *SimTalk* carried advertising, often focused on members' upcoming bull sales; however, low interest in Simmental bulls by commercial herds seemed to limit *SimTalk's*

popularity and circulation.

The determination of the ASA Leadership to re-focus on proving and improving SimGenetic value to downstream customers had more impact on *SimTalk* than any other ASA publication. *SimTalk* grew from 16 pages in 1995 to nearly 150 pages in January 2007. Circulation increased from a few thousand, to approximately 45,000. Cowherds and Feedyards have increased interest in Simmental crossbred cattle, and the Board believes that genetic identification teamed with age, source and management (weaning and vaccinations) validation has the potential to add additional value to Simmental influenced seedstock.

Recently, the Board developed the SimChoice Program as ASA's plan to validate both genetic and management values through the production chain. Both visual and electronic identification of Simmental influenced cattle will offer proof of value. Combined with weaning and vaccination management records, users of Simmental, Simbrah and SimAngus bulls can negotiate more value for their feeder cattle, and feed yards can expect more performance and marbling. Identification and proof of value are powerful factors in our industry, and people are a crucial part of our industry relationships plan.

The Founders of ASA had disdain for association employees who spent time schmoozing; consequently, the Association did not develop field staff. There were numerous challenges with this approach to proving, improving and marketing SimGenetics. Very large proportions of ASA's membership are not farmers or ranchers, nor do they derive most of their income from producing cattle. They benefit from direct, accountable informative interaction with ASA representatives.

Encouraging members to focus on producing cattle that appeal to the entire beef industry has huge potential for both their success and the Association. In addition, establishing ASA Staff with responsibilities to contact, inform and support downstream industry as to the value and supply of SimGenetics is essential, especially when expanding as quickly as we are today. Thus, the Board has developed ASA Field Staff who can focus on everyday service to both our members and their customers.

## Summary

The American Simmental Association's Strategic Plan focuses on three distinct goals:

**A. Position Simmental as the best maternal Continental breed.**

**B. Use ASA's open herdbook Rules and Bylaws to both expand genetic material available for up-grading Simmental, and develop composite seedstock most perfectly fitting our customers' needs now and in the future.**

**C. Develop programs that the beef industry recognizes as substantiation of value for specific member interests.**

The standing and ad hoc committees that serve the Board, and the staff view these goals as direction for our thoughts and efforts. Our everyday activities, committee meetings and Board meetings encircle these points of leverage to make the American Simmental Association successful.

### **Position Simmental as the best maternal Continental breed:**

Achievements to date:

- First breed to develop calving ease genetic evaluations
- Establish carcass merit program which benchmarks the value of Simmental crossbreds for calving ease, growth trait and carcass traits
- First breed to develop meat tenderness genetic evaluation
- Re-focused Cow Awards from completely output traits to balanced economic indexes
- Used PTP shows to moderate skeletal size through measuring frame scores on exhibited animals
- Established a cow inventory-based-reporting system that will provide data for

Projects in-progress:

- Testing methods to evaluate mature size and feed intake (efficiency)
- Testing methods to evaluate animal disappearance (young animals and cows) from TR and SR reporting
- Developing member award system for "Performance Advocates"

**Use ASA's open herdbook Rules and By-Laws to both expand genetic material available for up-grading Simmental, and develop composite seedstock most perfectly fitting our customers' needs now and in the future.**

Achievements to date:

- Established open herdbook in Rules and By-Laws
- Passed Sire of Another Breed registration rule
- Developed Multibreed Genetic Evaluation
- Developed SimSolutions and SimAngus as ASA products
- Trademarked SimAngus