

▶▶ **TRACEABILITY**

Tassie beef gets rhythm in Seoul

By KATE DOWLER

TASMANIAN grass-fed beef is being sold to Koreans with a new traceability system that shows the consumer the farms where the cattle were raised.

The system, believed to be the first developed by southern Australian processors, enables consumers to enter a code number into a website and narrow the source of their beef down to five farms.

The aim now is to further refine the system, which launched last month at Greenhams' Smithton plant in Tasmania, so each piece of beef can be traced to an individual herd.

Greenhams managing director Peter Greenham said the website — www.capegrimbeef.com.au — had attracted 100 hits a month.

He said the system was not yet an exact science, but consumers could identify the four or five farms that supplied the beef in a particular carton.

“What we've done with this database is give consumers confidence that their beef has been produced in a certain way,” he said.

The website outlines the breeding of the cattle, location of the farm, pasture types and the fact that the cattle were not fed GM-products or hormones.

It also has pictures of the farmers who supplied the beef, giving consumers a greater personal connection, and sense of trust that they are buying a quality Tasmanian product.

“Next we will redevelop our boning room and this will allow

us to trace each piece of meat back to a specific farm,” Mr Greenham said.

“It might take us a few years to develop the system and it will be a very expensive exercise.

“Nippon Meats in Queensland is doing it now, so we know it is possible.”

Mr Greenham said Korean consumers appreciated that the information was available, even if not all accessed it.

The marketing tool is helping Greenhams sell more Cape Grim Natural Beef in the face of increasing sales of usually cheaper US beef.

All the cattle processed under the label are grass-fed, sourced direct off-farm and go through the processors' Meat Standards Australia grading system.

Mr Greenham said while the company's label was working well, at a broader industry level, the national grass-fed standard, being developed by Cattle Council of Australia, would be another good marketing tool for southern producers.

He said Korean demand for Greenham beef remained fairly stable, thanks to a strong relationship with major supermarket chain, Lotte Mart.

“We are retaining market share there, despite the US beef coming back into the market,” Mr Greenham said.

“But outside of retail it is a lot harder.”