

First Meeting of the New Hampshire Meat Producer Working Group March 20, 2017

Attendees: 9

1. Background:

This summary reflects a range of views expressed on the issues as discussed during meetings of the New Hampshire Meat Producer Working Group (NHMPWG), comprised of meat producers throughout the state. They do not reflect the formal or public position of any one group of people, organization or coalition. All errors and omissions are the sole responsibility of Environmental Mediation Center (EMC).

After members of NHMPWG introduced themselves, the facilitators from the EMC provided background information about the project. The EMC conducted 4 focus group meetings with meat and poultry producers throughout the state. Meeting summaries from the focus group meetings are available on the project website <http://www.emcenter.org/nhmeatandpoultryproject>.

A common theme raised during all the focus group meetings was that there were certain challenges to the meat industry in New Hampshire such as lack of access to pasture in winter, high cost of feed, and lack of availability of land. As a result, it is impossible to compete price wise with industrial sized operations in other parts of the country and even exports from New Zealand. Instead, the focus needs to be on marketing high quality local premium product rather than commodity meat.

Fifty-four meat and poultry producers also filled out surveys about the size of their operation, the challenges they face, and their interest in increasing the size of their operation. In addition, the EMC met with 4 processors individually to discuss the project.

The NHMPWG discussed the potential to invite state and federal regulators and other experts to make presentations at upcoming meetings. Presentations to the NHMPWG will be available on the project website. Once approved by the members of the NHMPWG, meeting notes will also be available on the project webpage.

2. Review of Topics from Meat and Poultry Producer Focus Group Meetings:

The NHMPWG discussed the meeting notes from the four focus group meetings with producers. The issues were organized into categories and included the following.

- **Producer/Processor Issues**
 - Improve communication and collaboration with processors on scheduling
 - Facilitating scheduling and transportation to processors

Developing more/or alternative slaughter and processing facilities.

Mobile processing

On site slaughter/transfer for processing

Seasonal processing facility

Improve quality/appeal of packaging

- Marketing
 - Joint marketing campaigns
 - Professional assistance
 - State marketing assistance (map, brochures)
 - Farm specific efforts (websites, social media, farm days)

- Distribution
 - Food Hubs
 - Fresh meat sales

- Narrow profit margin/Reducing cost of production
 - Different models of operation such as buying young stock in spring
 - Group bulk purchasing

- Regulatory Issues
 - Exemptions from certain regulations for small producers to expand access to market
 - Existing regulations burdensome, complex, limit growth

- Transportation Costs
 - Facilitating organization for transportation efficiencies
 - Transportation cooperative
 - Livestock haulers

- Labor Issues
 - Insurance
 - Difficulty finding skilled work force
 - Training/UNH

- Poultry specific issues
 - Lack of USDA processing facilities

3. Prioritizing Issues:

After discussing the suggestions from the focus groups and adding a few additional issues, the NHMPWG utilized “dot polling” to determine which issues they wanted to work on. The group

based its decision on the importance of the issue as well as the ability for the working group to formulate feasible recommendations that will likely have an impact.

The NHMPWG decided to focus on the following issues during the upcoming meetings.

Mobile Slaughtering:

The NHMPWG will investigate the feasibility of developing a mobile slaughtering facility which would either stop at regional centers near meat producing farms or at the farms. The carcasses would be transferred to a facility for processing.

Cooperative Processing Facility:

The “bottleneck” is the processing of the meat, not the slaughtering. The NHMPWG will investigate establishing a cooperative processing facility and examine similar facilities and/or models utilized in other regions. Members are also interested in investigating establishing secondary processing facilities in New Hampshire.

Distribution:

In addition to selling frozen meat, the NHMPWG would like to increase sales of fresh meat. The NHMPWG will also investigate establishing a “food hub” to increase sales of both fresh and frozen meat.

Joint Marketing:

The members of the NHMPWG produce a premium product that typically sells at a higher price point than commodity meat. In order to increase sales, the members will explore a joint marketing campaign to educate consumers as to why local premium meat costs more and the advantages to buying locally produced meat. The members will also explore funding sources for the marketing campaign.

Quality Packaging:

Since the meat produced by NH producers is a premium product, the NHBPWG members believe the packaging should reflect the same high quality. The NHMPWG members would like to collaborate with processors to improve the quality of packaging so that their products are more appealing to consumers.

