

Vermont Mobile Poultry Processing Unit

Lessons Learned from the First Four
Years ~ Prepared for the Niche Meat
Processors' Assistance Network

History

- Planning commenced 2006, constructed 2008
- **Partners:** Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Department of Health, producers, and foodservice/restaurant managers
- **Funders:** Vermont Legislature, Castanea Foundation
- Designed by Vermont Agency of Agriculture
- Equipment from Cornerstone Farm Ventures (NY)
- Built by Brothers Body and Equipment (OH)

Costs



Total cost to design, build and ship was \$93,000

- Operating expenses were initially underestimated by the operator
- Operator implemented a higher mileage fee (\$1.05) and a minimum of 100 birds to offset travel costs

Outputs

- Spring Hill Farm served roughly 40 different producers over three seasons of operation
- Mostly chickens, some turkeys, a few others
 - 1400 in year 1
 - 9800 in year 2
 - 14,600 in year 3



Transitioning to Private Ownership

The unit was purchased from the State by Tangletown Farm, Middlesex, VT in January 2012

The new owners are working with a Farm Viability consultant to develop a financially viable model for operating the unit (mobile or fixed)



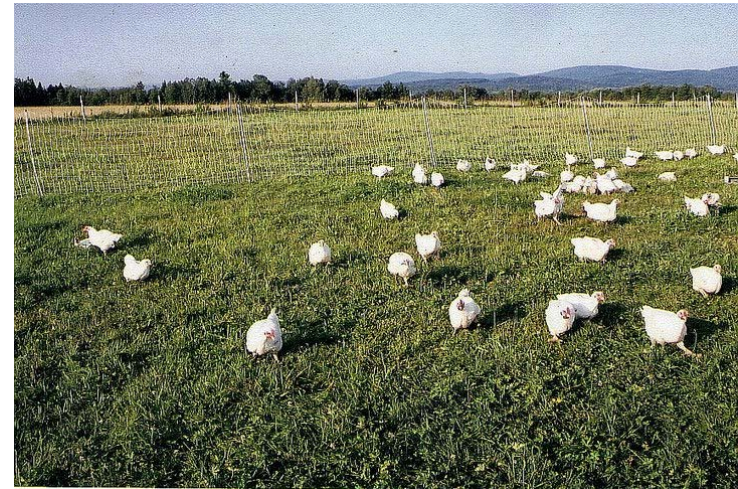
Assessing Goals

- **Problem:** Few other processing options for Vermont producers
 - ✓ Poultry producers were able to scale up and access new markets

- **Problem:** Safety and animal welfare
 - ✓ On-farm or local processing limits
unconventional transportation of animals

Case Study: Sunshine Acres Farm

- Went from 50 birds per year to 800 in three seasons
- Sell to grocery co-ops and restaurants in Northern Vermont
- Interested in working with other producers to explore construction of another fixed or mobile facility



Logistical Lessons Learned

- Importance of establishing a potable water system before unit arrives
- Must have a backup plan for inedibles if not able to leave at farm or docking site for composting
- Vermont Accepted Agricultural Practices rules exempt farms from some wastewater management requirements
- Producers were willing to drive birds to regional docking sites

Strategic Lessons Learned

- Market demand exists, with producers eager to supply
- Role of government *vis a vis* private sector
- Importance of feasibility and business planning

