

TENNESSEE FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

2016 Policy Development



Meat Sales

Issue

There continues to be a growing demand for farm products sold retail by the producer. Meat cuts are no different. Retail meat sales present a unique and increasingly popular niche which livestock producers are filling. As the trend grows more popular and the waitlist at slaughterhouses licensed to process meats for retail sale grows longer, more processing capacity may be necessary. Farmers accessibility to these facilities is not always ideal. Some driving over 100 miles one-way to deliver to their retail processor.

Background

Custom slaughterhouses that do not process meat for retail sale are regulated by USDA and licensed by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) but do not have USDA or TDA employees on site every day to conduct inspections. Meat processed at these facilities may only be consumed by owners of the live animal or guests of the owners. It may not be resold and should be labeled "Not for Sale." Federal law requires meats sold by the cut be inspected by USDA monitored slaughter facilities. Livestock owners may choose to sell shares of an animal before it is processed at non-USDA inspected facilities in order to divide meats with other families. Tennessee has 152 meat processing facilities which are permitted by TDA. Of those, twelve have USDA inspectors at their facility to inspect when carcasses are being processed for retail sale. Meats from these processors can be packaged and sold by the cut.

State legislation introduced in the 2016 session proposed to give custom slaughterhouses the ability to process retail cuts of meat. However, this would have been contrary to federal laws and regulations. The proposed legislation failed because of concern it would violate federal law and subject Tennessee producers to federal enforcement.

Questions:

1. Are there adequate retail meat processing facilities in your region?
2. If custom processors have the ability to process for retail sale, do you believe that will result in consumer confidence problems?
3. Does USDA's role in the inspection process increase the integrity of the meat industry?

Farm Bureau Policy

Improving Family Farm Income (Partial)

Tennessee faces a shortage of slaughter capacity. Personalized and customized options once provided by small packing plants are difficult to find. Producers need to have consistent access to a well-run, flexible and profitable facility to link independent livestock producers to end consumers. With customized value-added products, we have an opportunity to fill the ever growing demand for locally produced products. We support programs to enhance opportunities for farmers selling products directly to Consumers.