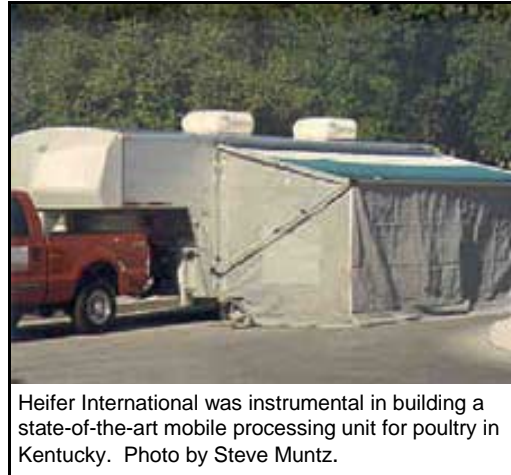


Appendix G

Project Summary

Enhancing Feasibility for Range Poultry Expansion

Helping producers and groups establish or expand small pasture-based poultry businesses is an interest of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and its partner Heifer International. “Enhancing Feasibility for Range Poultry Expansion” was a project led by the two nonprofit organizations. During an earlier project helping limited-resource farmers try out small batches of “pastured poultry” as an enterprise, the organizations realized that many of these farmers would like to expand operations and, in particular, need access to slaughter facilities in order to sell inspected meat. Consolidation in the meat processing industry has left few small plants.



When starting or expanding an enterprise, it is important to do feasibility and business planning. To develop *Growing Your Range Poultry Business: An Entrepreneur’s Toolbox*, NCAT and an additional sustainable agriculture partner, the Kerr Center, surveyed small producers to determine their needs. The Toolbox focuses on feasibility issues that look at personal and family considerations, as well as marketing, production, and economic issues. It is especially important to look at the web of meat inspection regulations related to processing. The Toolbox also contains Budgets for enterprises such as a small operation with on-farm processing and direct marketing, as well as a Mobile Processing Unit (MPU), and a small plant. The Toolbox discusses the benefits of working together instead of being a “lone ranger,” especially when establishing a processing plant, and refers to resources for assistance.

The project also examined the use of Mobile Processing Units (MPUs). MPUs are a development tool to help producer groups develop a consistent product, build a market, and build capacity. Producers can start with small flocks, ironing out production issues with a low investment of resources. MPUs reduce individual risk since the unit is shared by a group of producers. Once a market and capacity are built, a small regional processing plant can be established.

In Kentucky, Heifer worked with a collaborative group, including the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and Partners for Family Farms, to build an MPU. In Kentucky, no poultry can be sold unless it is slaughtered in a licensed facility. The KY MPU is a federally exempt facility that is licensed by Kentucky’s Cabinet for Health Services. It is an enclosed gooseneck trailer, with equipment mounted inside. It cost about \$70,000 to build. It must be used at approved docking stations that include a level place to park the unit, a

Appendix G (continued)

concrete pad, and appropriate electrical, water, and waste hookups. A canopy extends out and is screened in to make an outdoor kill area. Facility managers must be trained to use the unit. It has a rental fee and user agreement. The plant has Standard Sanitation Operating Procedures (SSOPs) and an HACCP plan. The unit takes a lot of work to set up and tear down but is an excellent example of how MPUs can operate. The Kentucky MPU not only provides a good option to small KY poultry producers, but serves as a model for other groups exploring MPUs.

Heifer examined the use of MPUs in two other states. As of 2002, Mississippi state meat inspection authorities did not permit an MPU to operate under exemptions. Heifer brought players to the table—inspection authorities, legislators, and farmers—to discuss the impact of meat inspection regulations on small poultry producers. The interpretation of the federal exemptions in Alabama were similarly limiting for small producers. Heifer identified a federally licensed plant that might consider custom processing and organized



Careful planning is important when expanding range poultry operations. Photo by Karen Machetta.

the farmers interested in supplying it with birds, along with the trailer and crates needed for hauling them.

Additional reports from the project include *Poultry Processing Facilities Available for Use by Independent Producers in the Southern Region*, *Legal Issues for Small Poultry Processors*, and reports on nutritional resources and stock. These publications are available on the website of the American Pastured Poultry Producers Association (www.apppa.org) or ATTRA can provide hard copies free of charge.

In the future, NCAT, Heifer, and the Kerr Center can provide training to farmers, educators, and other agricultural professionals interested in pasture-based poultry enterprises.

- Heifer International is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the alleviation of hunger and poverty through community development and sustainable livestock production. The headquarters is in Little Rock, AR.
- The National Center for Appropriate Technology is a nonprofit organization with offices in Butte, MT, Fayetteville, AR, and Davis, CA, that has programs in sustainable agriculture, energy, and communities. NCAT promotes the economic well-being and quality of life of urban and rural residents while working to conserve America's natural resources.
- The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture is a nonprofit education foundation in Poteau, OK, with a mission to encourage sustainable agriculture.

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