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