

BUTCHER SHOP SURVEY FOR FARMERS

Hello Livestock Farmers!

We're two pasture-based livestock farms in southern IN. We sell meat directly to consumers, and we struggle to find nearby, quality processing options that meet the needs of chefs and farmer's market customers. We have a Farmers-Rancher Grant from USDA SARE to explore opening a farmer-to-farmer butcher shop.

We're asking you to take 15 minutes to fill out a survey about your processing reality and needs. The survey is anonymous, but your input can help ID ways Indiana can improve its processing options. We'll share what we learn.

Find some time before **March 15th**, grab a hot cup of tea and click on the QR code in the middle of this poster, or visit <https://tinyurl.com/y5z57ztf>

Our Best,

Nate and Liz Brownlee, *Nightfall Farm*
Dennis and Tricia Bowers and Butch Plumer, *Plumer & Bowers Farmstead*



RESOURCES FOR STARTING A FARMER-TO-FARMER BUTCHER SHOP

Almost every livestock farmer struggles with butchering services. In 2017, our two livestock farms partnered with a chef and set out to open a butcher shop that would work for us.

We've worked with lots of processors over the years. Some are great, and some just aren't focused on customer service for small farms who sell to chefs and at farmer's markets. We received a USDA SARE grant to complete a feasibility study of a farmer-to-farmer butcher shop. We're putting together floor plans, cash flow projections, and more for two very small scale butcher shops. This info will all be online www.nightfallfarm.com/processing, and open source for you to utilize. We're adding more content all the time, and should finish by Spring 2019. We've outlined some of these resources (and context) here, and they are available for download from the website.

ASKING THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

Before digging into planning, we recommend working through some tough questions. Gather any collaborators, including your family, to ask:

Your Goals and Quality of Life

- Why do you want to open a processing facility?
- Will opening a processing facility improve your quality of life? How?
- What problems or stressors will this facility solve? Will it create others?
- What would success look like?

Time, Money & Resources

- How much time and money do you have to put towards this project?
- Have you tried all of the existing processors near you?
- Are there any allies in your area that might want to collaborate on a processing facility?
- How do you want to spend your time? Are you comfortable with slaughter? Do you enjoy butchering? Do you want to spend hours inside, in a cooled room, butchering?
- Do you want to add another enterprise to your business or start a new business?
- Does your state or farming association have grants or loans that you could utilize?
- Have you talked with other livestock farmers or meat customers to assess demand?

Scale & Inspection

- What scale do you imagine for your facility: slaughter and cut/wrap? Only butchering? Only value-added? Other?
- What level of inspection does your idea require: custom-exempt? State-inspected? USDA-inspected? Other?
- What will be your niche: ethical treatment? Customer service? Value-added products? Something else?
- Which animals are you planning to process? How does that impact the facility plan (example: slaughtering cattle requires at least 20' tall ceilings and a high rail system)



LAYOUT & EQUIPMENT

What can fit in your site? Touring nearby facilities can help generate ideas. We hope that our drawings will help, too.

We hired a consultant to create floor plans for an extremely small, 5-species slaughter and cut-up facility as well as a butcher-only facility, including a list of needed equipment. These will be available for free on our website. We hope you will utilize, adjust, and learn from these open source materials:

- Floor plan and equipment list for a 5-species, slaughter, processing, and smoking facility (cattle, pigs, lambs, deer, poultry):
- Floor plan and equipment list for a 3-species (cattle, pigs, lambs) processing and smoking facility (no slaughter).

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Snap this QR and take our survey!

Join fellow farmers to better understand the needs of meat farmers! Take this brief survey to share your experience about meat processing in Indiana!

Nate and Liz Brownlee, *Nightfall Farm*

Dennis and Tricia Bowers and Butch Plumer, *Plumer & Bowers Farmstead*



Or visit: <https://tinyurl.com/y5z57ztf>

FINDING PARTNERS & SELECTING A SITE

Zoning

Ask if your site can host a processing facility, or if you would need a variance.

Septic and Sewer Capabilities

Find out what your scale requires, and have your septic capabilities tested. In Indiana, try <https://www.oisc.purdue.edu/irss/roster.html>.

Neighbors and Family

Would your facility be within sight, sound, or smell-distance of your neighbors (or your family)? If so, how can you plan for success?

Proximity to Home

Talk with your family about the pro's and con's of having a processing facility on your property.

Allies

We're working with a trusted chef on our butcher shop. His expertise and training guided our planning and research. Maybe you have a key ally, too.

Market

Identify your target customer (nearby farmers who need butchering services? Retail meat customers? other?) and assess demand for your services or products.

Consultants

The price tag might be daunting, but working with consultants can help you find answers more efficiently and add objective insights. Consider NMPAN's list of consultants, and talk with farmer-processors in your state – they may be willing to act as a consultant.

Connecting with Regulatory Bodies

Pick up the phone and call to introduce yourself. In our experience, these folks are open and excited to talk with potential processors.

CASH FLOW & FINANCIALS

The numbers don't lie. We have tried to be honest with ourselves about the financial viability of our ideas. This can be difficult, because we know that a better butchering option would improve our quality of life and the quality of our meat. To ensure that we have thorough numbers, we hired a consultant to help us with the financials.

First, we ran the numbers for a Farmer to Farmer, slaughter and processing facility for five species (cattle, pigs, lambs, deer, and poultry). This facility employs 4.5 people.

After seeing the numbers, we decided that this scale didn't fit our goals (investment was too high, and it required more retail than we think we can support at our location).

We decided to look at a different option, at least to start: cut and wrap only, for three species (cattle, pigs, lambs). This facility employs 1 person (or two part-time).

You will be able to view all of these cash flow and financial projections on our website by Spring of 2019. These projections are open source, so please utilize them and adapt them to your purposes.

SURVEYING FARMERS

We want a processing facility that serves farmers' needs - so we need to listen to other farmers and meat customers in our area. We've partnered with Indiana University to host a survey for meat farmers and assess farmers' input. If you're an Indiana livestock farmer, we'd love for you to take the survey.

Your input will help us capture a picture of processing options, stressors, and opportunities. The survey is anonymous, but we'll share what we learn with Extension Agents, the Indiana Dept. of Ag, BOAH, and others who can help work for the processing options we all need. Thanks for filling out the survey - and for sharing it with any livestock farmers you know!

FINDING FUNDING

Whether your facility is going to cost \$75,000, \$250,000 or some other amount, outside funding will be helpful. Here are a few options we're investigating for our facility:

State or Regional Grants

Indiana doesn't, but some states and regional organizations offer grants for farmers improving food infrastructure. Ask your farmer organization and your state department of agriculture.

Federal Grants

USDA's Value Added Producer Grants have funding for planning and building facilities.

We are utilizing a SARE Farmer-Rancher Grant to investigate the feasibility of our butcher shop. These grants are available to farmers doing innovative, sustainable projects throughout the country.

Loans

Revolving farmer loans, small bank loans, or FSA Microloans might be a helpful tool, too.

Cooperatives

Working together with a group of farmers may be another funding option.

KEY RESOURCES

Learning from the Past and Incorporating New Ideas

Introduce yourself to knowledge-holders in your area. Many of the older farmers still have equipment and knowledge about on-farm processing that can apply to your facility. Our parents' stories helped us understand the community's connection to processing and cooking – and they informed our ethos and branding.

Also reach out to the latest, greatest processors in your region. We visited processors in our tri-state region, and each one was eager to help us along our way. They offered tours, knowledge about equipment and customer demand, and regulatory insight.

Don't forget Youtube. There are fantastic videos from farmers who are paving the way, like Heritage Meats in Washington and The Healthy Butcher in Toronto.

Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network

NMPAN is the go-to resource for small, niche meat processors. We recommend grabbing a mug of tea and taking a deep dive into their website. You'll find:

Robust introductory resources, like a "Beginner's Guide to Local Meat Processing"

A whole portion of the website focused on new facilities and expansions

Help with business planning, including their "Business Planning Guide for Small Meat Processors"

Contact information for consultants who work with meat processors

A listserv for current and future small meat processors of all stripes. It's free to join. You can ask the group questions or just see what folks are talking about.

Peer consulting services for current processors

Template Feasibility Studies

Oklahoma State University offers a series of spreadsheets for farmers to manipulate. This is the resource we utilized. It includes a slaughter facility (or can be adapted for cut and wrap, only).

Business Planning Resources

Don't reinvent the wheel. In addition to NMPAN's "Business Planning Guide for Small Meat Processors," there are also template business plans for agricultural businesses. These templates can walk you through the process of writing a plan, even if you've never tackled a business plan before. Here are three options from Cornell's Small Farms Program (scroll about half way down the page). They can help you lay out as much (or as little) detail as you need: Type A is a basic 4-page plan, where Type C teases out more details, financials, etc. The three templates even come with instructional guides.

HACCP Plans, Food Safety, & Regulatory Compliance

No need to reinvent the wheel here, either! Every processing facility that's inspected must have a "Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point" plan, or HACCP plan. These can seem daunting at first. Thankfully, the good folks at University of Wisconsin have compiled food safety planning resources that farmers can adapt for their facilities. They have template HACCP plans as well as validation and documentation info.

The USDA also offers a "Small Plant Help Desk." Check out their resources on regulatory compliance, food safety, and more. Even if you're going to create a state-inspected facility, these resources can prove useful (just be sure to cross-check what you're learning with your state officials). Our state officials in Indiana actually directed us to this useful resource

Your state officials

In Indiana, processing is overseen by the Indiana Board of Animal Health. They have been helpful at every step of our feasibility project, from helping us understand the basics (What are the basic types of inspection in our state? What are the septic requirements for a facility?) to the details (Can we ferment meats? Are there others already doing this in Indiana?).

OUR SARE PROJECT

We received a Farmer-Rancher grant from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program of USDA. With SARE's support, we set out to create a "shovel-ready" plan for a "farmer-to-farmer" processing facility. See what projects other farmers are tackling (or apply for your own grant to research new ideas).

Our farms aren't unusual: we raise animals on pasture and sell meat locally - and like many livestock farmers, we struggle with processing. Sometimes the challenge is scheduling, other times it's quality, transparency, or packaging and value-added products.

We wanted to test an idea: could we open our own processing facility, one that's structured by farmers, for farmers? Our goal was to test the feasibility of our idea and share all of our resources with the farming community. We're part way through the project now, and we're eager to share what we've learned. All of the information on this poster is available at www.nightfallfarm.com/processing.

We'd love to learn with you. Please be in touch if we can be helpful.

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