



DIVISION OF GRADUATE STUDIES
AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

October 12, 2023

LL.M. Program in Agricultural and Food Law
1045 W. Maple St.
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701

RE: The State of Sustainable Meat Processing - What Laws and Policies Make a Difference?: SARE Research and Education Grant Proposal

To Whom it May Concern:

As both a small, sustainable livestock producer for the past ten years and the Extension Livestock Specialist at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, I have worked to assist other livestock producers who have expressed an interest in developing a small meat processing and slaughter facility in the Delta region of Arkansas. Despite numerous expressions of interest, including my own, the policy and legal hurdles to opening and operating a new livestock slaughter facility are a significant barrier to entry. There is a tremendous need for small, niche meat slaughter and processing facilities to help sustainable farmers and ranchers develop new meat products and capture more of the retail dollar to enhance their economic sustainability.

There is a significant need for this research because regulatory requirements for the construction of a new, small slaughter plant which could meet the needs of local livestock producers are cost prohibitive. Small, niche meat processing plants are not able to meet the regulatory requirements in an economically sustainable way at the present time. The result is that small, sustainable farmers and ranchers are shut out of the opportunity to sell meat directly to the public. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically impacted the meat supply chain when large-scale meat slaughter and processing facilities were shuttered due to outbreaks of the disease among the workforce. A more distributed, smaller scale meat slaughter and processing infrastructure might have averted the crisis created in meat supplies to American consumers.

I commit to participating in and supporting "The State of Sustainable Meat Processing - What Laws and Policies Make a Difference?" application to Southern SARE Research and Education Grant Proposal. I commit to actively participating in this three-year project from April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2027. I will support the project by: I will support the project by: serving as a reviewer for the project. I believe my experience as a former meat inspector, and current small scale livestock producer and Extension Livestock Specialist will contribute significantly to this project.

Sincerely,

David L. Fernandez, Ph.D.
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