

SARE Grant Final Report  
Lake Country Premium Natural Beef

Project # FNE00-339  
Natural Beef Marketing Project

The goals of our project was to develop a local natural beef product in the Upstate New York Region through a marketing alliance, which would market this niche product in the local area supermarkets. The focus of our project would be the promotion of source verified natural beef through exposing the consumers to our product with supermarket taste test and advertising.

Our farm profiles are updated as follows

Forrestel Farm  
Dawn/Phil Keppler  
4765 So. Gravel Rd.  
Medina, NY 14103

1100 acre beef farm –intensive grazing, IPM, participant. Works with USDA Soil Conservation to protect stream banks of the Oak Orchard Creek (International Body of Water) Full Time 300 head Cow/Calf Hereford & Angus cattle operation. Phil is In charge of Lake Country's producer relations and Protocols required by the USDA Natural Label. Dawn Is in charge of plant operation of Lake Country Premium at the Pat's Market processing plant.

Hartway Farm  
Darlene/Charles Hartway  
4524 Mix Road  
Albion, NY 14411

400 acre beef & grain farm. Farming 12 years. Intensive grazing, IPM, IRM participants. Work w/USDA Soil Conservation on Feedlot Improvement Project. Charles produces the certified feed for the Lake Country feedlot. Darlene is the General Manager of all Lake Country and Pat's Market slaughter and processing.

Hanova Hills Farm  
783 Hurlbert Road  
Forestville, NY 14062

300 acre beef farm, part time farmers – 10 yrs. W/ Manager Doug is a retired University of Buffalo professor and Lake Country's marketing partner.

Oak Hill Land & Cattle 1000 acre beef, grain, & fruit farm, full time farmer- 10yrs.  
1640 N. Lyndonville Road NY Grazing Advocate. Intensive grazing, IPM, IRM,  
Lyndonville, NY 14098 Conservation efforts in the Oak Orchard Creek.

In this SARE Grant we implemented a product introduction of our natural beef product, Lake Country Premium Natural Beef, to area stores and markets. We discovered that while there is a great deal of interest in our product, our packaging is not as well done or professional as the large packers can provide. The problem is our processing plant that we purchased to produce Lake Country Premium Natural Beef, while well maintained and functioning, has outdated and inadequate packaging equipment. We currently white wrap all of our custom processing for farmers and have an old vacuum packaging machine which cannot keep up with the demand of Lake Country production, let alone any requests for vacuum packaging by farmers. We also are inexperienced ourselves in packaging and what direction our plant should take to alleviate this problem. We would like to produce and package Lake Country and other farmer products with more

consumer appeal and professional appearance regional labels. This will help other farmers retail their product. We have brought in other farmers that have natural lamb and chicken and our helping them market, but they are also requesting better packaging.

While our distribution is very limited, we have received a tremendous response from our wholesalers. We feel if we can improve our plant for Lake Country products, then we can provide these same services to farmers at a competitive price. These services are not provided anywhere else to farmers in our region.

**Partner Participation:**

Douglas Bunker made contact with the stores and help coordinate the taste testing and product stocking in the stores.

Darlene Hartway & Dawn Keppler did the taste testing and established store relations to continue sale to stores of the product tested.

**Technical Advisor --**

Mike Baker – Beef Cattle Extension Associate: Cornell University

Mike has been instrumental in helping us evaluate producer that may want to participate in this marketing venture as well as technical advice on protocols on the farm and beef production practices.

We have accomplished the goal of attracting other farmers to the idea of retail direct to the consumer, now we have to follow through with a more professional package to compete in a small way with the large packers.

  
Dawn M. Keppler  
Partner

Date 1/2/02