Niche Pork Marketing
The NC Perspective
September 23, 2010
**What is NC Choices?**

**NC Choices** is a Center for Environmental Farming Systems’ Initiative that promotes sustainable food systems through the advancement of local, pasture-based animal production, processing and marketing.

NC Choices focuses on post-production issues:
1) Marketing
2) Processing

and three main species:
1) Beef
2) Pork
3) Poultry
The Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS)
A Partnership of the:
• North Carolina State University
• North Carolina Agricultural & Technical University
• North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
Triangle Pilot Test

- $9,000 / week in sales at 3 stores
- 8 farmers
- 2 processors
- Pastured beef & pork
Extension & Education Activities

- Grower workshops
- Extension agent trainings
- Site visits & technical assistance
- Website/Profiles
- Annual Conference
Research Endeavors

CONSERVATION

75% ground cover is benchmark - more research needed
NC Pork Industry

• NC’s pork industry was born from culture— not production or distribution advantages.

• Currently #2 pork producer in the nation.

• NC is home of Smithfield, world’s largest pork producer and packer. Responsible for 90% of pork processing in NC.

• 76% of hog farms over 5,000 animals.

• Pork production is about 25% of total farm receipts.
Concentrated Hog Operations
What is Niche Pork in NC?

Grower Profile

• 5-200 acres-
• Feeder pigs to 60 sows.
• Highly diversified, most raise multiple species and crops.
• Year-round, pastured systems- few if any hoop-barns in use. Antibiotic use varies depending on market.
• Most direct market through Farmers Markets, CSAs, Buying Clubs.
• Few sell into larger ‘branded’ volume buyers/ aggregators such as Whole Foods, Weaver Street Market, restaurants.
Who is the Pastured Meat Customer?

Customer Profile

• Varying levels of income, age, ethnicity.
• Awareness of “industrial agriculture” from media.
• Want to support small, local farms.
• Recovering vegetarians- “guilt-free meats”.
• Animal welfare concerns.
• Interest in heritage breeds- lean pork is a turnoff.
• Seeking a “connection” with something authentic, want to know the origins of their food- some want to come kill animals!
NC Direct Market Snapshot

• NC is home to 3,712 direct marketing producers with total sales of $29 million.

• North Carolina has an estimated 200 farmers’ markets and 200 (CSAs).

• NC Department of Agriculture tracks producers who direct market meat:
  NC Certified Producer Meat Handlers:
    2008 - 180
    2009 - 306
    2010 - 375 - over 120 of these are currently producing pastured pork.
NC Challenges to Development

• Demand outstrips Supply, especially in Heritage Breeds

• Processing - We need more processors, offering more services and doing a better job of it.

• Feral Swine control

• No niche producers own/control processing

• Whole Animal Utilization - need chefs and middle business to take up this issue - ex. Farmhand Foods.
Processing: Local Meat Bottleneck

- Markets
- Processors
- Producers

- Cutting
- Value-Added
- Packaging
- Traceability
NC Factors of Success

- NC’s pork culture - Columbus & DeSoto early 1500s. BBQ is a noun.
- Climate
- NGOs
- NC State University and NC A&T University
- Cooperative Extension
- Tobacco Settlement - transitioning farmers
- Metro areas with high levels of income, rural areas with a culture of self-sufficiency
Supporting NGOs

Since 2000, the Golden LEAF Foundation has awarded $459 million to NC non-profits and government entities.

ASAP publishes Local Food Guide and Appalachian Grown Certification

CFSA Annual Conference and 25 years of advocacy

Annual conference 1,600 attendees, farm mentoring and internship programs
Statewide Action Plan

April 2010 - the Center for Environmental Farming Systems releases 100 page *From Farm to Fork* a Statewide Action Plan for recommendations to legislators.

This publication is the result of a multiyear, multiagency research program identifying 9 challenges and 11 “game changers” actionable within 2 years.

Spurred the creation of the Statewide Local Foods Advisory Council, chaired by NC Ag. Commissioner and members of all sectors including Farm Bureau.
NC Dept. Agriculture Marketing
In 2009, North Carolinians spent $35 billion on food. If all North Carolina residents spent 10 percent of their food dollars on local foods ($1.05 per day), approximately $3.5 billion would be available in the local economy every year.
Why Pastured Pork?

- Pasture-based animal production offer a great opportunity for small scale producers
  - Nutrient Management
  - Low capital start-up, low risk
  - Access to premium markets

- Livestock industry is under considerable scrutiny with regard to environmental impact.

- Concerns about food safety, animal welfare, and environmental management have driven the demand for pastured pork products.

- Small-scale can capitalize on niche markets by emphasizing the animal and environmentally friendly aspects of their farm.

- Diversification is key to small farm survival
Animal Welfare Issues

- Natural behaviors of rooting & wallowing
- Weaned at a later age
- Raised with litter mates
- Outdoor nests for farrowing
- No tail docking, teeth clipping

NC Choices
a Center for Environmental Farming Systems initiative
Waste Management Issues

- Waste as a resource
  - Fertilizer for subsequent crops
  - Composted in hay & spread on fields
Welcome to NC Choices!

NC Choices is a Center for Environmental Farming Systems' initiative that promotes sustainable food systems through the advancement of local, pasture-based animal production, processing and marketing. NC Choices provides information, technical assistance, educational programming and networking opportunities.
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