

SUSTAINABLE FARMING

VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 1

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THE ENEMY AT THE GATE?

WHY BIOSECURITY MATTERS



PLUS
LABELING LAB-GROWN MEAT
CHALLENGING FOOD CHOICES
GO CERTIFIED REGENERATIVE



BACK ON TRACK



It is now a little more than two years after the COVID-19 pandemic began. While some predicted this virus would quickly disappear, it is still part of our daily lives and will likely remain so for quite some time. As

a team, we've learned how to adjust and respond to the challenges, safely resumed in-person auditing, and our work at AGW continues.

We are monitoring avian influenza, as AGW encourages (and requires) certified farms to follow biosecurity measures to minimize risk to their flocks. You can follow the situation through the USDA's APHIS website or Canada's CFIA website, as well as your applicable national, state or provincial animal health website for outbreak areas. Our technical team is always here for any questions that come up.

In March, we attended Natural Products Expo West in California, along with several certified farms and brands. Not only did the event underscore the tremendous level of interest in sustainable food, but also how unscrupulous players are taking advantage of this interest to promote unhealthy ultra-processed foods—including meat and dairy 'alternatives'—to an unsuspecting public. This is the time to be loud and proud about why your AGW-certified products are so great.

Whether on-pack, at point of sale or elsewhere, our marketing team is here to help bring your certification front and center! We're excited to announce the world's first Certified Regenerative by AGW farm (see page 3). We could not have done this without the help of many, and a special thanks goes out to all those who participated in the pilot program. Launching a new certification during a global pandemic was a heavy lift, but you helped us make this program even better.

We had an unprecedented response to our AGW farmer survey, which will shape our services, content and resources. Three key takeaways emerged from the following question: 'What do you value about A Greener World?' It was clear you value AGW as an organization, you value AGW certifications, and you value AGW standards.

AGW continues to be recognized and celebrated as a program with practical and meaningful certifications that have a real and positive impact. We're excited about our work ahead, with you at the heart of all we do.

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BIG 1ST!



CHALLACOMBE FARM

Welcoming the world's first farm certified for regenerative stewardship by AGW

Challacombe Farm, U.K. (above), is the world's first farm to be Certified Regenerative by AGW. Building on our successful family of leading labels, Certified Regenerative by AGW is a whole-farm, plan-based regenerative certification, offering assurance of sustainability, measuring benefits for soil, water, air, biodiversity, infrastructure, animal welfare and social responsibility, and giving farmers, consumers and buyers confidence in reliability and impact. Currently, most regenerative claims are not verified at all. AGW's certification verifies meaningful regenerative claims and provides transparency that benefits producers and consumers.

Located in the heart of the Dartmoor National Park, England, Naomi Oakley and Mark Owen raise Welsh Black and North Devon beef cattle and Icelandic and Shetland sheep on moorland that has been farmed for thousands of years. Challacombe Farm was a participant in AGW's inaugural Certified Regenerative pilot cohort, a group of 50 farms across the globe that spent the last 18 months in partnership with AGW evaluating farm standards, plans and auditing procedures.

"We are thrilled to celebrate this milestone with Challacombe Farm and to be a partner in their regenerative goals," says Emily Moose, AGW's Executive Director. "With this certification we provide trusted assurance of verified, positive impacts—on the farm, in our communities, at the table and for the planet."

"Taking part in AGW's Regenerative accreditation trial proved to be a good way of consolidating our plans to farm in harmony with nature," says Mark Owen of Challacombe Farm. "It was important for us to get external, independent feedback to help us achieve our aims."

Certified Regenerative by AGW welcomes farmers and growers of all backgrounds, meeting producers where they are as partners in a journey of regeneration. As the pilot concludes, AGW is accepting comments on the standards and will open the program to new applicants this summer.

For more information, contact regenerative@agreenerworld.org

IN THE NEWS...

WORD ON THE STREET

A Greener World's logos were recently featured by Martha Stewart and The Wall Street Journal.

"How to Read a Food Label" in The Wall Street Journal discusses what key certifications signify, including Certified Grassfed by AGW, and how they have "materialized to help consumers sort fact from fiction." Martha Stewart's article, "What the Labels on Packages of Chicken Really Mean," focuses on how to "decode" the various logos and claims found on poultry packaging—including Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW.

THE NEW COOL

New legislation could see the return of mandatory country of origin labeling for beef.

Introduced in late March, the bipartisan American Beef Labeling Act would require the development of a World Trade Organization-compliant means of reinstating country of origin (COOL) labeling for beef within one year of enactment. Current beef labeling laws allow imported beef to be simply finished in the U.S., before being processed, packed and labeled as a product of the USA. There is no current timeline for the legislation.

2021 IN REVIEW

Our latest annual report is available to download at agreenerworld.org/library

"2021 In Review highlights our activities and the key successes of over 6,000 farmers and ranchers with whom we work, responsible for managing more than 3 million acres of land across the world," says Katie Amos, AGW's Communications and Outreach Manager. "We also explore our key goals for the next year—and beyond."

A GREENER WORLD 2021 IN REVIEW



USDA GRANTS

The USDA will invest \$1 billion in partnerships to support America's climate-smart farmers, ranchers and forest landowners.

The new opportunity will finance pilot projects that create market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forestry products that use climate-smart practices and include innovative, cost-effective ways to measure and verify greenhouse gas benefits. USDA is now accepting project applications through June 10 for the second funding pool.



IN THE NEWS...



LADY EDISON

USDA



BIRD FLU UPDATE

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has been identified in 29 U.S. states, according to USDA. The outbreak has affected commercial and backyard flocks from Maine to Idaho, with the culling of almost 30 million birds to limit the spread.

“This is an ongoing issue for farmers around the world,” says Tim Holmes, AGW’s Director of Compliance. “Certified farms may choose to follow

the recommendation of local or governmental authorities and temporarily remove birds from pasture. This would be an acceptable justification by AGW and farms simply need to include this in their pasture plan if the period exceeds 28 days. You must, however, comply with all housing standards, specifically regarding shelter and additional space requirements. If you are in any doubt, please get in touch. We’re here to help.”

FACT GRANTS

Grants of more than \$170,000 were allocated by Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) to a diverse group of 60 livestock farmers and ranchers.

80% of the grants were for first generation farmers—a majority being women-owned. And, in solidarity with the movement to obtain racial equity in agriculture, 45% were to farmers who identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Color.

AGW-certified beneficiaries included: BOTL Farm, CT; Graze the Prairie, KS; Callywood Farms, SC; Joia Food Farm, IA; Serendipity Farm, MI; and Tucker’s Black Angus Ranch, NY.

EDISON LIGHTS THE WAY

Six Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW products received recognition at the 2022 Good Food Awards for their contribution to creating sustainable, delicious and vibrant food economies.

Lady Edison was a double-winner for Sherry Bacon (above) and for Spanish Town Kitchen Jerk Bacon made with Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW and Certified Non-GMO by AGW pork from the North Carolina Natural Hog Growers Association. “We’re thrilled and grateful to be honored with this award, and to be in such great company,” says Sam Suchoff of Lady Edison. “We work hard to produce the very best products and it all starts with the farms that supply us.”

Firefly Kitchens, LLC was a finalist for their Kimchi Hot Sauce made with Certified Non-GMO by AGW products. Elisabeth Bueschen-Monahan of Fraga Farmstead Creamery, LLC was a finalist for Goat’s Milk Caramel made with Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW goat milk. Ashly Martin of Texas Iberico was a finalist for Dry Cured Guanciale made with Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW pork. Jan and Rinske de Jong of Working Cows Dairy were finalists for their Slocomb Tomato & Garlic Cheese made with Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW, Certified Grassfed by AGW cow’s milk.

Winners were chosen from over 1,966 initial entries. AGW-certified products have received Good Food Awards every year since 2013. Visit goodfoodawards.com

GM BEEF?

The U.S. Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) has declared a new gene-edited cattle breed as safe for human consumption.

Developed by Acceligen, the PRLR-SLICK cattle breed is modified to grow a short coat to cope in hotter weather. The FDA gave the cattle a “low risk” designation on the basis that the genome changes are “equivalent to naturally occurring mutations that occur in conventionally raised cattle.”

Meat from PRLR-SLICK cattle could appear undifferentiated on the market in less than two years.



GREEN DIRT CHEESE

AGW-CERTIFIED CHEESE SWEEPS THE BOARD

Green Dirt Farm won Best of Class at the 2022 World Championship Cheese Contest in March. Green Dirt’s Sheep’s Milk Feta Cheese took top prize at the contest with a score of 99.5, while their Aux Arcs’ Cheese—a blended cow and sheep’s milk cheese similar to Gouda or Gruyere, pronounced “Ozark”—also won a second place award.

“We’re very proud to be crafting fantastic cheese using practices that support the wellbeing of our animals, our community and our team,” says Sarah Hoffmann, Managing Director at Green Dirt Farm. “These awards are a fabulous confirmation that we’re on the right path!”

Held in Madison, WI, the biennial contest is the largest technical dairy products evaluation in the world, with nearly 3,000 across 141 classes by cheesemakers from 29 countries worldwide and 33 U.S. states.

LEADING IN GEORGIA

Fourth-generation cattle farmer, Joseph Egloff (pictured right) of Rocking Chair Ranch, GA, was named 2021 Producer of the Year by the Georgia Cattlemen’s Association.

Egloff raises Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW beef cattle in Forsyth and is a proud proponent of pasture-based management and sustainable farming. “Our aim is to supply our customers with the best beef we possibly can, and we are committed to promoting animal welfare

and health, as well as to leaving a minimal impact on our environment,” says Egloff. “We chose to pursue an AGW certification because having a third party give us credit for our commitment to animal welfare and sustainability matters to our customers, and it adds value to our bottom line. It’s what makes us stand out in the marketplace.”

Congratulations to Joseph and the team at Rocking Chair Ranch from us all at AGW on this well-deserved recognition.



ROCKING CHAIR RANCH

OATLY COURTING TROUBLE



The UK advertising watchdog, the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA), has banned a high-profile marketing campaign by Swedish plant-based ‘milk’ brand, Oatly.

Oatly’s “Need help talking to dad about milk?” adverts appeared on UK social media, national television and newspapers in early 2021. The adverts made claims about the environmental impact of oat drink compared to conventional dairy milk. The adverts received 109 complaints—

including a detailed response from AGW. In its ruling, the ASA stated that Oatly’s ‘green’ claims were misleading, as they were not backed by sufficient scientific evidence.

“We welcome the ASA’s ruling,” says Wayne Copp of A Greener World Europe. “Environmental marketing claims must always be backed up by sound science. In this case, it was found that Oatly’s claims could not be substantiated and were therefore misleading.”



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Your donation supports real change.

A Greener World is a nonprofit whose work is made possible by donations from people like you. Because we are not dependent on certification fees, we can remain impartial in our auditing, resulting in unrivaled integrity and trust. Your donations help us stay independent. Will you partner with us to build a greener world by giving today?

Learn more at agreenerworld.org/donate

SUSTAINABLE FARMING

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LOOKING FOR A STANDOUT LABEL?

Our labeling team can help you create a high-impact design that complies with all relevant food labeling guidelines.

Available FREE OF CHARGE to farmers, ranchers and food businesses in the AGW certification family.

For full details visit agreenerworld.org/farmer-services/labeling-support or call 800-373-8806

Opinion

A HEAVY TOLL

Too many farmers and ranchers are suffering from depression and addiction, warns Tara Klager

In agriculture, we're all used to worrying about weather—not enough moisture, too much moisture, moisture at the wrong times. We're used to worrying about markets, equipment, labor and inputs. We're used to worrying about so many things except our own health and wellbeing.

The Canadian Mental Health Association recently reported that more than half of farmers would meet the diagnosis criteria for anxiety, and a third would meet the threshold for depression. These statistics are something to worry about, particularly when one considers the common coping choice for both these mental health concerns is self-medicating and Substance Use Disorder (SUD).

Addiction is something most of us are familiar with. We've heard the stories and read the headlines. But addiction is just the last stop on a track that starts in moderation and ends in a train wreck. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (the bible for mental health professionals) defines SUD as "a mental disorder that affects a person's brain and behavior, leading to a person's inability to control their use of substances such as legal or illegal drugs, alcohol, or medications. Symptoms can range from moderate to severe, with addiction being the most severe form of SUDs."

Rural Canadians drink at a higher rate than their urban counterparts and Canada ranks third in the world for 'drunk days,' behind only the United Kingdom and the States. (On average, Canadians drink about 2.6 gallons of alcohol a year, while

their American cousins are holding up their end of the bar at 2.3 gallons a year.) Alcohol is a factor in between 25 and 30 percent of completed suicides and, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, farmers in the U.S. are among those most likely to take their own lives.

While there are signs that mental health in agriculture is getting some attention—for example, there are helplines in each province across Canada and online options exist for those looking for assistance—support for those who are living with SUD or who care about someone who is suffering is still hard to come by. Furthermore, as agricultural communities are often small and interconnected, anonymity isn't an option, and farmers and ranchers are reluctant to seek help from professionals with no understanding of their rural realities. After all, if things are sliding out of your control but you are also calving, you're going to grit your teeth and hang on. 'Muscling through' is a way of life—and a shackle.

With everything farmers have to deal with—from a changing climate to changing markets—building more resilient families and communities must become a priority for all of us. It's time to apply that trendy 'regenerative' tag to the people we love, as much as the land we live on.

If you or someone you care about is struggling, support is available. Farmers in Canada can contact The Do More Agriculture Foundation at domore.ag. Farmers in the U.S. can contact Farm Aid at 1-800-FARM-AID (1-800-327-6243)

FROM LAB TO LABEL

Emily Moose outlines AGW's concerns about the labeling of lab-grown meat—and what we're doing about it

Public concern about eating and producing meat has increased considerably over recent years. Driven by a growing interest in the links between our dietary choices, public health, and climate change, the all-too-frequent and ill-informed media headlines and campaigning efforts by interest groups to demonize all meat—regardless of how it's produced—have landed all of 'animal agriculture' in the hot seat.

Follow the money

In response, opportunistic global agribusinesses are scrambling to produce palatable alternatives to fresh meat to exploit this new market opportunity, generating vast profit margins by adding value through the ultra-processing of cheap commodity crop materials, such as protein extracts, starches and oils.

But alongside the explosion of ultra-processed plant-based products, heavily funded biotech start-ups across the world are now racing to mass produce laboratory-grown imitations of beef, chicken, pork—and even shrimp and fish—as more 'sustainable' or 'humane' alternatives. Proponents claim the biomanufacturing of these meat alternatives will make the care, slaughter and processing of farmed animals a thing of the past—and with them, the environmental harms associated with industrial livestock production. But are these promises based in science or fiction?

Lab-grown 'meat'

Despite the massive media hype, significant uncertainties remain in the scientific community about whether it is possible to safely produce lab-grown 'meat' at any scale due to biosecurity and contamination risks, as well as the accuracy of claimed environmental benefits. And at this stage, no one knows if it can even be produced

economically. At an estimated \$10,000 per pound, it is currently far beyond most budgets, although some market analysts claim the price will come down to \$2.50 per pound over the next decade.

Labeling concerns

As an organization dedicated to positive change and grounded in science, A Greener World has been at the forefront of efforts to demand transparency in this new technology. However, powerful corporations and investors behind the lab-grown 'meat' industry (and anti-meat rhetoric in general) are concerned about the public response. As a result, there is a genuine risk that lab-grown animal protein products could be sold in supermarkets and restaurants without anyone even knowing what they really are.

In September 2021, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a public consultation to inform future regulatory requirements for the labeling of cultured meat and poultry substitutes. The USDA posed 14 questions, covering topics from whether these products should be differentiated at all, whether they should be called 'meat,' and what information consumers might want to know, if any.

Through our public comments to the consultation—and subsequent public advocacy and education work—we have presented concrete, actionable steps necessary to ensure the public is fully informed about their food choices and that meat products from farmers who are practicing genuinely high-welfare, sustainable stewardship and responsible management are adequately protected. Our full comments are available online, but our key positions include:

► **Honest terminology:** To ensure fair and transparent markets for farmers and clarity for consumers, any product that did not originate



WHAT IS LAB-GROWN MEAT?

Lab-grown meat (also known as 'synthetic' or 'cultured' meat) is where animal muscle tissue is artificially created in laboratory-like conditions from animal stem cells bathed in nutrients and growth factors. Grown in bio-secure incubators, the cells multiply in such a way that 'muscle' is formed. Various techniques are under development.



SVETLANA CHERNUTY

from a live animal, born from another live animal and raised on a farm should not be labeled as 'meat' or 'poultry' (or their equivalent), and should be clearly identified as produced using animal cell culture technology. To ensure lab-grown products are differentiated from traditional meat and poultry products, the terms "cell-cultured protein" should be the generic product name.

► **Accessible labeling:** Labeling should *clearly* and unequivocally communicate the product is derived from animal cell-cultured technology in text the same size and visibility as the product name on the actual package—not hidden on a website link. Likewise, QR codes should not be permitted for use in conveying additional information about source material, as this limits information access and risks misleading consumers. Do only people with smartphones and extra time at the grocery store deserve to know what is actually in their food?

► **Full source material disclosure:** From both transparency and food safety/allergenicity perspective, the product should clearly specify any and all species of animal cells it derives from, as well as all ingredients and materials used in the manufacturing process.

► **Steak, patty or filet?:** If the form/shape of a similar meat or poultry product term is used, it should be in quotation marks to denote a clear difference from the genuine analog. For example: 'Cell-cultured protein "Steak" derived from beef cells', and 'Cell-cultured protein "Burgers" derived from turkey cells'.

► **No animal-raising claims:** Because no animals were raised, bred, handled, fed, or cared for in any way, claims like 'humane', 'organic', 'natural' and 'sustainable'—or breed claims like 'wagyu'—should not be permitted for lab-grown meat products, as there can be no truthful statement made about animal production.

► **No 'greenwashing':** Any sustainability claims must be backed up by independent science and

data. (We take this seriously—see p. 4 for more on our recent challenge to 'greenwashing' claims from an oat-milk manufacturer). We know that many consumers are increasingly seeking food that has been verified to deliver positive benefits to the environment, animals and rural communities (like food from AGW-certified farms and ranches). Yet no such benefits have been scientifically demonstrated for cell-cultured protein derived from animal cells.

A call to action

A Greener World will continue to support our farmers and ranchers by demanding labeling and food policies that deliver verified, positive benefits to animals, people, and the planet—not merely promises. And through our family of certifications, our logos will continue to provide consumers with a clear guarantee that they are buying food that does exactly that.

It is crucial that meat from high-welfare, sustainable farms has a fair chance in a market increasingly threatened by misleading and unproven marketing claims—something we're witnessing in real time in the lab 'meat' hype. All of us in the food and farming community have a responsibility to help raise consumer awareness about the development of cultured meat substitutes and to ensure this technology (and industry as a whole) gets the deliberate consideration and scrutiny it deserves before landing on our dinner plates. As we know all too well, it's a lot harder to put the genie back into the bottle.

Emily Moose is Executive Director at AGW

For AGW's full 3,600-word response to the USDA on the labeling of cultured meat and poultry products, see agreenerworld.org/a-greener-world/comment-fsis-2020-0036



JUST WHAT ARE WE EATING?

As Amy Price-Neff MD explains the convenience of food and its sugar coated messaging is not good medicine

Eating is a tough subject these days. Choices abound. Marketing is manipulative.

When it comes to buying food, advice is wildly conflicting. Feeling better does not necessarily result from the advice one reads and some suggestions can be unsustainable (keto much?). The ironic result is that quality of life stays low. There is a growing awareness of the connection between food quality, how it is produced, the environment, animal welfare, climate change, and politics. This awareness is clear in the growing demand for verified sustainable foods (like those certified by A Greener World), as consumers seek help in the marketplace to minimize harm from choices. This fact remains: the simple act of buying food today can be a very stressful business!

Feeling bad

In this article I am going to talk about food—particularly animal foods—in relation to our individual well-being. While we eat for many reasons, one of the toughest and most common issues with food is that it makes us feel ‘bad’. This can be the result of feeling guilty: typically, the ‘I-shouldn’t-have-eaten-that’ kind of thinking, or ‘that-food-is-good, that-food-is-bad’ kind of thoughts. Sometimes it is more physical: heartburn or bloating, or a skin breakout or joint pain or brain fog. Sometimes food ends up being a person’s only antidote/reward for the offenses of modern life; a placating tool that tries to make up for loneliness or loss or trauma, but perversely perpetuates a cycle of poor-quality eating. Often, in our search for health, people end up living in households where everyone is eating differently, which can drive a wedge between friends and families. A theme that arrives related to food is that there are upsides and downsides to each of our choices. However, if we start to put human health at the center, clarity begins to emerge.

A focus on health

I am a physician in Nashville, Tennessee, where I do integrative medicine. What that means is that, like most people, I have come to acknowledge that Western medicine is but one tool in the box

used in the pursuit of well-being. Modalities like mindfulness, yoga, supplements, biofeedback and nutrition are now commonplace, and actually have quite a bit of ‘Western’ literature to back them up.

Unfortunately, most patients are usually told to take medicines and are expected to be ‘compliant’ with the program—even when side effects are terrible, or the medicine is not working. These issues occur because there is not enough time built into a medical appointment to fully explore a patient’s needs or the provider is not trained in the basics or the provider is too burned out to care.

Why do people feel so bad? There are lots of areas to consider. Toxins, stress, genetics, difficult relationships, trauma, the microbiome and the possibility of infections are good places to start. However, what we eat influences all of these factors in some way. So, in terms of personal empowerment, improving our diet is arguably one of the easiest and fastest ways to feeling better.

A focus on diet

What is it about diet that can make people feel so bad? How is it that foods that were perfectly acceptable 20–30 years ago suddenly are not ‘good’ for us? Probably the most remarkable and important aspects of food production related to human health over the last few decades are the contamination by farming chemicals of food and the extraordinary prevalence of modern food processing techniques.

These industrial practices have arrived far more recently than most people might realize. The first genetically modified (GM) crops eaten on a large scale by people were not grown until the mid-90s. Today, around 90% of corn, soy, sugar production and alfalfa are GM, typically to tolerate pesticide applications. Glyphosate is also widely applied to non-GM crops as a desiccant just before harvest to dry the crop out. This is considered a good business practice, one that increases crop yields per acre and profits. Unfortunately, evidence is clear that glyphosate is not good for human, environmental or animal health. Also unfortunate are the lengths that industry goes to obscure this fact. As the advocate for human health here, I just have to call it what it is.



The 'nocebo'

One of my favorite tools is the placebo: to invite (with intention) a harmless option that a person uses to ritualize an investment in the self. We know that many Western medical interventions are effective because of placebo—and in my practice that is not a negative! It is a tool to be leveraged, with that 'all-hands-on-deck, whatever works' attitude.

But the placebo has a negative counterpart: the 'nocebo.' This noxious placebo can have a profoundly negative effect on health. When one does something, or perhaps is prescribed a treatment that they do not believe in, the lingering thoughts that this is a bad idea clearly increase the likelihood of a bad outcome.

Let's apply this nocebo thinking to the idea of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) meats. As a working mother of three, I am a big

fan of convenience. But unfortunately, convenience is one of the greatest threats to human health out there. Processed foods are no doubt convenient, but the trade-off is poor health (not to mention animal welfare and the environment). The convenience of a rotisserie chicken or take-out barbecue (did I mention that I am from Memphis?) has its appeal, but I have integrated the supply chain limitations into my purchase, no longer capable of forgetting the CAFO or the 'big ag' processor threats that contribute to my nocebo-feeling about the product. In the same way that I now make sure that I do not have time not to meditate (others may feel similarly about exercise or socializing), over the years I have become more committed to the idea that I do not have time not to stop and cook a good meal if I want to feel well.

Food processing comes in many forms, such as milling, cooking, drying, making smoothies. But it is industrial processing where health problems arise. Processing has some upsides in terms of product shelf-life, something that protects the Consumer Price Index and reduces the fluctuations in the price of food in times of drought, flooding and other effects of climate change. But the downside is that many processing technologies and food additives are simply designed to benefit the manufacturer's bottom line, and thus result in 'food' that is far from ideal when it comes to human health.

Furthermore, what the food industry can now do is make cheap, low quality, low nutrition commodity ingredients look, smell and taste incredible—or 'craveable,' to use industry-speak. This perverse form of manipulation is especially tough for kids and people who have ever struggled with their weight. The intentional design of making 'junk' foods irresistible is something that, as a doctor and a parent, I utterly abhor.

Food as harm, food as healing

Plant and animal foods provide us with things called 'essential nutrients'. Essential basically means that we are unable to manufacture the nutrient in our own body, so we have to get it from the diet. Essential nutrients include certain vitamins, minerals, and (one of my favorite subjects) essential fatty acids.

Essential fatty acids are well known among the health conscious these days. There are two categories of essential fatty acids, omega-3 and omega-6, named by the location of a particular type of carbon-to-carbon bond found in these long fatty chains. Omega-3s function in an anti-inflammatory role and omega-6s are a pro-inflammatory source. These fats are the building blocks for all cell membranes (as in every single one of your roughly 30 trillion cells) and are essential for the body to function correctly. Together they are like the gas and the brakes on our system of healing, which we have to do all the time. An optimal diet contains about 2-4 parts omega-6 for every one part of omega-3, but the typical modern American diet is somewhere between 10-30 parts omega-6 for each omega-3. This is speculated to be one of the reasons why inflammatory diseases are far more prevalent today than in the past.

We can get these essential nutrients from both plants and animals. However, plant sources of omega 3 (the anti-inflammatory fat) need to be converted in our gut before they become the 'high-dollar' versions found in animal sources, most famously oily fish like salmon. However, this conversion process is really inefficient, so that only about 5% of the plant form called

alpha-linolenic acid (ALA)—found in kale, spinach, soybeans, walnuts and many seeds—becomes docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). We need the plant-version of omega-3 fats in our diets, but there literally are not enough fish in the sea to supply our animal sources. While grassfed beef and dairy doesn't pack quite the punch of the cold-water fish, eating it offers two advantages: a reduction in omega-6 fats and an increase in omega-3 fats.

One area of research that I would like to see more of is the potential health impact of eating meat and dairy from farms that practice the type of sustainable livestock husbandry that promotes positive animal welfare and environmental health, as promoted by A Greener World's farm standards.

Ultra processed foods

I am a big fan of eating plants, but not in the way that replaces meat and dairy products with ultra-processed 'plant-based' alternatives.

What healthy plant-centric eating means to me is that you have replaced the highly processed foods in your larder with whole plants, fruits, grains and pulses, and that you use meats as condiments. By eating a mostly unprocessed diet, the nutrient density of foods is higher. As I mentioned before, there is a lot that we need to get from our diet that we cannot make on our own. Those things are not found in highly processed foods; if they are, such as in fortified foods, it is not necessarily in a form or amount that is good for the body.

Eating unprocessed plants and animals is not particularly 'craveable' and that is a good thing. I do not mean to say that eating this way will mean that you will no longer enjoy eating. But what you may find is that you are not susceptible to the "crunch all you want, we'll make more" urges that highly processed foods make you feel. The trade-off is that you may go to bed with fewer thoughts of having done something you should not have, and wake up feeling more alert, positive and energetic.

Turning the tide

Most of the time at work, when I hand out advice like a white-coated Ann Landers, I tell patients that I am also listening with intent to my own words. After all, we are all imperfect, navigating the choice-overload of life as best we can.

But what could help turn the tide for our individual health and well-being—and for the health of the planet—is that, whenever possible, we choose the things that interconnect to raise us all up. If we do, the food and farming system will shift towards increasing the availability of the kind of foods and diets that truly restore us and the world we share.

'When it comes to buying food, advice is wildly conflicting'

Dr Amy Price-Neff is a physician practicing medicine at Mindstream Integrative Medicine in Nashville, Tennessee, and serves on the AGW Board of Directors

HEALTH AND SAFETY



Quarantine is a simple yet effective tool to minimize disease risks from new arrivals



Aim to remove all organic debris and (ideally) disinfect vehicles before they enter the farm



Perimeter fencing will help exclude pathogens harbored by wildlife and neighboring livestock

Biosecurity is like an immune system for your farm, says Jen Gravley Burton DVM

You are hiking in the woods with a friend when a bear attacks. How fast must you run to escape?

- A 28 mph/44 kmh
- B Drop everything, climb a tree and wait it out
- C 36 mph/58 kmh
- D Faster than your friend

If you answered D, then you have the right mindset for biosecurity! Biosecurity is not about building an impenetrable fortress, irrelevant costly actions, or impossible goals. Rather, good biosecurity is about practical measures that keep you ahead of whatever pathogens may come calling.

Understand the foe

Which diseases are endemic in your area? Are there new arrivals? Do some pathogens pass through seasonally as wildlife migrate? If you are not sure, your local farm vet probably has some insight. Knowing which pathogens are present in your region—and which ones can affect your livestock—can help you make efficient use of limited time and resources.

When considering risks, ask two questions: how likely is it that this disease will reach my farm? If it does, how bad would that be? It is easy to address scenarios that are likely, or catastrophic. But the preventable diseases that are only somewhat likely—with moderate impacts—tend to sneak past us, eroding animal wellbeing and productivity.

To cause an outbreak on your farm, a disease agent must:

- A Enter your operation
- B Hide long enough to multiply
- C Spread into new animals, groups, or areas of the farm
- D Survive by settling someplace safe from your prevention/remediation efforts

So how can you counter these steps?

Exclude

In recent articles, we have highlighted the roles and actions of an animal's immune system. Biosecurity can be considered an immune system for your farm. You may not be able to eradicate a disease agent in your region, but you can take steps to keep it outside your perimeter fence.

In fact, a perimeter fence is a very good first step in excluding pathogens harbored by wildlife or neighboring livestock. But a few other common-sense actions at the farm gate and barn door can also help keep pathogens out.

When possible, keep delivery or rendering vehicles away from animal areas (ideally, remove organic debris and disinfect vehicles before they enter the farm). Wear clean boots. Work with clean/vulnerable animal groups such as newborns first and sick pens last. Use washable outerwear; if you may have been in contact with infected animals, change clothes before other chores. Provide separate cleaning and disinfection baths for all boots at key entry points. Minimize entry into animal areas and ensure everyone who enters follows the same guidelines.

Detect

Most pathogens need some time to incubate before they cause serious disease. If you isolate new arrivals from the rest of your animals for that incubation period (up to 4 weeks), you will likely discover any disease (and pests) they brought with them before infecting the rest of your herd or flock.

Quarantine is an excellent yet simple tool for detection in new arrivals, but what about disease in your existing herd? Diligent monitoring leads to early detection. Indeed, monitoring is a key component of biosecurity because it gives you an opportunity to intervene before infected animals incubate enough to affect the entire herd or flock.

DISINFECTANT

It is vital to choose the right disinfectant according to the microorganism(s) being targeted, product characteristics, and where it will be used. Follow all instructions to the letter and seek professional advice if in any doubt.

The Center for Food Security and Public Health has produced an excellent factsheet with practical advice on disinfectants, boot and vehicle cleaning. Download Disinfection 101 at cfsph.iastate.edu



Contain

Even before an animal's immune system positively identifies an invading pathogen, the body takes steps to contain it. Some immune cells engulf the unknown material, while others work to disinfect the region. At the same time, the body responds to tissue distress signals by sending materials needed for repair—and plenty of fluids.

This is an excellent model for a farm-level response. As soon as a potential disease is detected, containment should be a top priority. Avoid moving sick animals around the farm and prevent direct (nose-to-nose) contact with healthy animals. Increase cleaning frequency and disinfect all equipment and boots before use with healthy groups. Ensure excellent nutrition, including trace minerals and a constant supply of clean, fresh water.

Treat

An animal's immune system takes about three weeks to identify a new pathogen, fashion and execute a proper response. Thanks to veterinary science and technology, we can often obtain a positive diagnosis and begin targeted treatment the same day a disease is detected. As well as protecting animal welfare and productivity, prompt treatment can eliminate a disease agent before it finds a permanent hiding place on your farm. This is especially important if gaps in your genetics, nutrition, or handling occasionally cause some animals' immune systems to underperform.

Immune memory: Plan!

Vaccination allows a body to plan its response for a pathogen it has never experienced, and immune memory cells store that blueprint. If biosecurity is your farm's immune system, then your plans and records embody immune memory. Past experience is not required to handle a biosecurity incident well. But you are far more likely to succeed

with minimal losses if your team has worked through a "What if?" scenario.

Instead of listing all possible incidents or responses, a great biosecurity plan may simply outline how the farm will exclude, detect, contain and resolve disease.

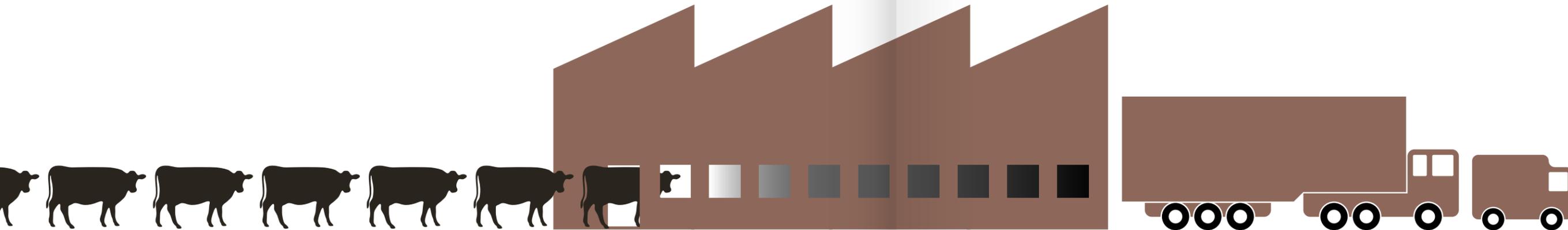
A biosecurity plan kept in a drawer will not protect your animals any more than vaccines left in the fridge. Provide your employees with training and involve staff in periodic refreshers. Whenever a new infection is noted on the farm, consult your biosecurity plan. Where did a breach occur? Could better monitoring or management have reduced disease impacts? Update the plan accordingly.

Staying ahead

Like other management decisions, you should approach biosecurity by understanding risks and determining which actions are worth their costs. Ask your vet which diseases may be present in your region, how likely is each to affect you, and how bad would it be if it did? Establish habits and behaviors that minimize everyday risks. When risks are higher, take a look at your biosecurity plan. Do you need to refresh your habits or adapt the plan to new circumstances?

It may be impossible to outrun the bear but that's ok. With sound biosecurity, you are well equipped to stay ahead of it.

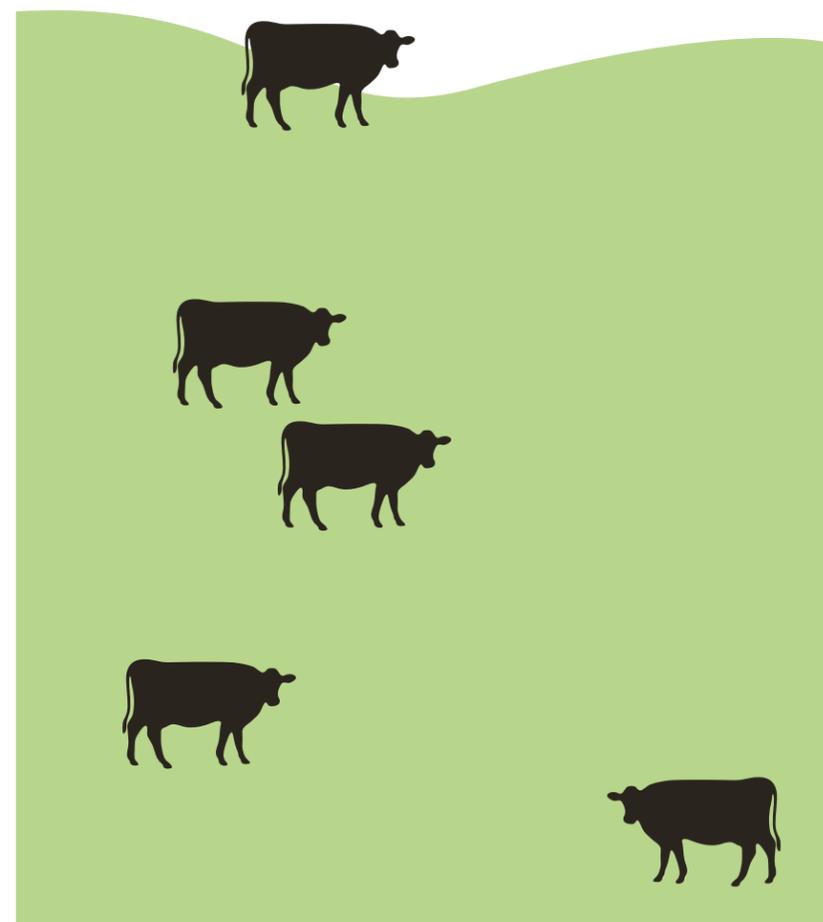
Jennifer Gravley Burton DVM is a veterinarian and educator with a special interest in the intersection of food animal medicine and public health



‘Just four meat processing companies control 82% of the market for beef, pork, and poultry’

FACTORY TO FARM

It’s time to move away from monopolization toward resilience in the meat industry, says Jennifer Curtis



In early 2022, the Biden Administration introduced a comprehensive plan to address monopolization in the meat industry.

I read the announcement with enthusiasm. Corporate concentration in the meat industry has been a problem for decades. Just four meat processing companies control 82% of the market for beef, pork, and poultry. Concentration of market power of that magnitude leads to collusion (such as price and wage fixing), discourages competition and innovation, and is well documented as bad news for both farmers and consumers. So it’s encouraging that the Administration is looking for ways to tackle the problem.

Smoke and mirrors

As it turns out, real reform—in other words, breaking up meat monopolies by strictly enforcing and strengthening anti-trust laws—is not part of their plan. (In fact, this hasn’t been tried since the 1920s). Instead, they are taking the more politically pragmatic approach of helping independent meat processors and ranchers become more competitive.

Their hope is that more competition will provide greater returns to producers and cheaper prices to consumers. They are looking to invest \$1 billion in new and expanded meat processing ventures. Fifteen projects have already been identified as worthy of investment as early as this spring. So, how does Biden’s plan stack up to our vision for meat industry reform?

A real opportunity

Increased access to more affordable processing capacity could be a game changer for our North Carolina-based business, Firsthand Foods. Every week we receive 1,000s of pounds of pork, beef, and lamb, all vacuum-sealed, labeled, boxed, and palletized by numerous small-scale meat processors, our critical partners in our supply chain. We understand the challenges they face: constant labor shortages, increasing material costs, hefty equipment investments, and intense regulatory scrutiny.

Investment in this sector is long overdue and we were thrilled when the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services allocated close to \$18 million in Covid-relief funds to help small-scale meat processors make infrastructure improvements. Despite these investments, all of the processors in our region remain booked out through the end of the year and cannot hire enough qualified people to fully operationalize their expansion plans.

Naturally, I am curious if any of the Administration’s funding will end up supporting the kinds of small-scale processing businesses that we and other aggregators, food hubs, and farmer cooperatives are working with around the country. A recent New York Times article about the Administration’s strategy suggests not. Instead, the funding is likely to support much larger-scale projects that can try to compete with the likes of Tyson and Smithfield. If past experience is our guide, the article suggests, these ventures will struggle to gain market access and will be vulnerable to the forces of horizontal integration and eventual buy out from the very same monolithic corporations they set out to compete with.

Paradigm shift

To truly transform the meat industry and break up the behemoths, we need a paradigm shift in focus—away from the efficiency of consolidation and toward the resiliency of collaboration. The pandemic has revealed the need for more nimble meat supply chains that can adapt to changing market conditions (vs. globally-oriented businesses that have a hard time pivoting).

What does resilient collaboration look like in the meat industry? For starters, it supports interdependence and risk sharing—farmers, processors, aggregators, marketers, customers—working together to share the essential, low-margin job of bringing meat to market.

Collaboration is the key

One of our core values at Firsthand Foods is

collaboration. We collaborate because it lets us share risk and focus on what we do best, which is aggregation, sales, and marketing. Traditional business school training would suggest that to truly get ahead, make money and compete, we should build our own processing plant. We should become more vertically integrated. It’s not that we haven’t thought about it. It could alleviate some problems and potentially contain costs.

But running a meat processing plant is frankly not in our wheelhouse. We’re built to help with other parts of the supply chain. So, we opt for the complex path of cultivating partnerships. This makes our meat more expensive, but it also means we are supporting family-run businesses in rural communities and circulating food dollars locally. It means that we are part of building a distributed network that is more resilient during hard times. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, we worked with our processing partners and pivoted from selling most of our meats to restaurants, which had to shut down, to supplying grocery stores and home delivery businesses. This took less than a month and while it wasn’t pretty, we got meat to our customers while others were looking at empty shelves.

A total rethink

To launch his anti-monopolization efforts, Biden is quoted as saying “Capitalism without competition isn’t capitalism. It’s exploitation.” The task of addressing exploitation in the meat industry is a big one, and I appreciate the Administration for taking a step in that direction. But the job is far bigger and more complex than simply seeding extra competition. I believe it involves re-thinking how we do business.

Jennifer Curtis is co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Firsthand Foods (see panel right). Visit firsthandfoods.com

FIRSTHAND FOODS

Firsthand Foods is a women-owned food hub that sells local meats from North Carolina farms with the mission of building a food community that values people and the Earth. They offer fresh cuts and specialty products made from AGW-certified pork from the North Carolina Natural Hog Growers Association, an established cooperative of AGW-certified producers dedicated to high-welfare, sustainable farm management and pig production. Firsthand Foods also offers fresh cuts and specialty products made from AGW-certified lamb sourced from farms in the Firsthand Foods lamb network.

LIGHT AND SHADE

Tips on keeping your cattle cool



MARTINFREDDY

Heat stress is a serious welfare issue for cattle that can also result in significant decreases in feed intake, milk yield, fertility and weight gain.

The ideal ambient temperature for cattle is between 41°F and 77° F. Depending on the relative humidity, solar radiation, wind speed, and access to water and diet, cattle can suffer heat stress in temperatures above this range. Signs of heat stress, such as increased respiration rate (greater than 90 breaths per minute), standing versus lying down, and congregating under shade or at water sources, are generally easy to spot. Other signs, such as increased water intake or reduced feed intake, can be subtle and difficult to recognize.

While cattle can tolerate higher temperatures if relative humidity is lower, in some areas of the U.S. where the climate is humid subtropical and prolonged periods of high temperatures and humidity are common, cows cannot dissipate sufficient body heat to prevent a rise in body temperature, which can quickly result in death if left unaddressed.

Controlling the amount of solar radiation that cattle receive is one of the best methods of reducing heat stress. Providing shade is an obvious solution but radiation levels can also be significantly affected by the surrounding vegetation. Dry enclosures with limited to no vegetation, including feed lots and graveled and concrete areas, will reflect more light and heat than thick, grass pastures.

Natural shade

Cattle generally prefer shade from trees rather than constructed structures. Trees are effective at blocking incoming solar radiation, and moisture evaporating from their leaves helps cool

SUNSCREEN

Cattle should not only have access to grazing and exercise areas but should also be provided with adequate shade and shelter to protect them from climatic extremes. On many farms, this is provided by natural vegetation but in certain situations it may be necessary to provide either temporary or permanent structures.



surrounding air. Though natural shade is low-cost, it is all too often not where it is needed—and there are other disadvantages. If there are insufficient trees for the number of cattle, they will congregate under the trees, eroding the soil and exposing the roots, which can damage or even kill the trees over time.

In many cases, existing trees are located near riparian areas. If cattle congregate in those areas, there is a risk that off-site runoff of soil and manure into adjacent streams or water bodies could occur. Using strategic plantings can increase natural pasture shade and, with the right varieties, can provide useful shelter in a surprisingly quick timeframe.

Man-made structures

Permanent shade also can be provided by constructing barns or sheds. These are most often provided for dry lots and bull lots, and so do not easily fit with the notion of rotational grazing practices. As with existing trees, permanent shade is not located where it is needed, and it can be costly to build.

Simple designs for low-cost portable shade structures are widely available online, while several companies now sell portable shade in different sizes and designs. As shade placement will affect the animal grazing patterns and forage use, it is therefore important to observe animal traffic patterns and adjust shade locations accordingly for best pasture use.

Article adapted from *Farm Health Online*. For more information about practical, science-based advice on high-welfare livestock management, visit farmhealthonline.com

Certification news

CASTRATING BREEDING MALES

Frank Morison addresses a common question

Many farms and ranches in the AGW program produce their own breed stock for replacements or sell breed stock to other farms in the program or to other pasture-based farms. Raising your own breed stock may reduce your overall expenses, while selling breed stock can offer a useful additional revenue stream. However, there are some important things to consider under the AGW standards.

Breeding males

Our long-term aim is to have approved breeder farms providing stock to other AGW farmers. But as it is not possible to make a final assessment of the males with the best genetic characteristics early in life to ensure the quality of the stock they produce and potentially their fitness to be used as breeding stock in pasture-based systems, we agree in principle that breeder farms can apply for a derogation to castrate a proportion of males at an older age than permitted in the standards. This derogation potentially covers cattle, sheep, goats (both meat and dairy) and pigs. The criteria that a farm must meet in order to gain a derogation is as follows:

- A. The farm must be raising breeder stock for their own use or for sale (and not solely raising meat animals)
- B. The farm must have clear criteria for selection of entire males kept for breeding
- C. A derogation request for the late castration of all males born on farm will be refused
- D. The initial assessment of animals against selection criteria must be made within the time limit for castration for the species
- E. Animals that fail the initial selection criteria must be castrated in an approved way within the defined age limit

- F. The final assessment must be made before the animals reach 9 months of age for cattle; and 6 months of age for sheep, goats and pigs
- G. An exception is only permitted for beef farmers if the farm can demonstrate that a particular trait cannot be assessed until the animal is older than 9 months (castration decisions must be made by 12 months of age)
- H. Castration pain relief must be provided to any animals that have failed selection at any time after the defined age limit
- I. Any animal older than one week of age that is castrated under this derogation must be castrated by emasculator (burdizzo) or scalpel only

The submission of any derogation request does not guarantee approval. Nevertheless, the more information and notice you can provide, the better your chances.

Missed testicle

A late castration derogation request will also be considered if a testicle was missed during the initial banding castration procedure and the standard timeline has expired. The earlier you can apply for the late castration derogation the better—and pain relief *must* be provided. Finally, remember that if you do decide to sell breeding stock, you'll need to submit a written breeding plan first. Please refer to section 14.1 (Marketing Breeding Stock) of the standards for additional information and get in touch if you have any questions.

For further information regarding castration or other management issues and animal welfare, download our *Technical Fact Sheets*. Visit agreenerworld.org/resources/science-and-research

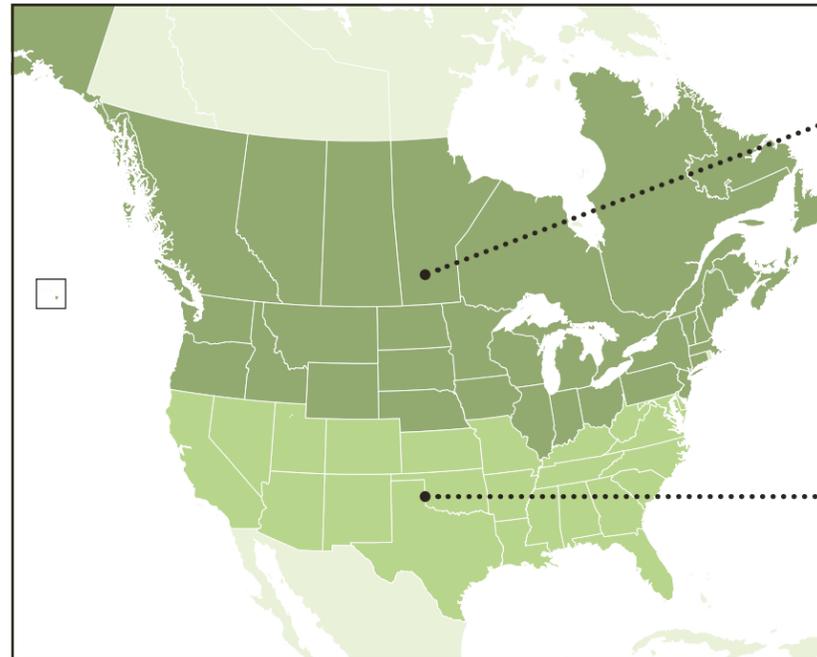
Frank Morison is Lead Auditor with A Greener World

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From Alaska to Wyoming, Alberta to Saskatchewan, our outreach team offers a one-stop shop for farmers, ranchers and food businesses!



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Promoting A Greener World

AGW is proud to offer low-cost branded promotional materials to help raise awareness of your certification and better communicate the wider benefits of your farming practices. Every purchase also supports our work to educate and inform consumers—and helps keep your certifications affordable.

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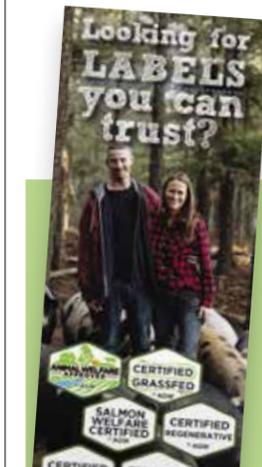
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 Meet the farmer



LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Ronald Simmons (above) produces pasture-raised pigs and vegetables on 76 acres in Duplin County, North Carolina, the third generation to farm the land. Master Blend Family Farms supplies pork products to restaurants and high-end eateries across the East—and a major basketball stadium!

How did you get into farming?

My father-in-law was debating if he should sell the family farm after many years raising pigs. I asked him for an opportunity to give it a shot. That was basically the beginning of it. After that came lots of research through NC A&T, NC State and NC Cooperative Extension, as well as the gentlemen and women in my neighborhood with decades of experience. Learning about how they raised pigs was a big spark for me. As I learned more, things just gradually drew me to the Animal Welfare Approved certification program. The wealth of knowledge I found was very important.

Describe a typical day

I get started about 4:15am. To be successful, I believe you have to know what your purpose is. So I start my day with a prayer to seek understanding. I always take time to look at my calendar before the day gets going. With the team, we evaluate what orders are going out, before loading trucks and tractors, moving equipment, checking livestock, water, feed and wires. I try to surround myself with people who have different and better strengths than me. A good team will catch things that could potentially fall through the cracks.

What do you love most about what you do?

The amazing combination of a peaceful natural

environment and the constant challenge of implementing novel ranching practices. And doing it all with family.

Who are your customers?

Our customer base is the East Coast. From the individual consumers to the larger accounts, all share the same passion for high-quality, sustainable products. It was completely unforeseen that we'd get product to the Atlanta Hawks!

Sustainable farming: why does it matter?

Because you're looking out for the next generation. I'm always adamant about leading by example for kids. The farm becomes a kind of classroom. You're investing in the future of sustainable agriculture.

What's the benefit of being certified by AGW?

It gives our customers a sense of confidence in knowing what we stand for and how we farm, and they are more willing to work with us.

What are your plans for the future?

We will see. My kids have and I have discussed their future in farming. We have a food truck that has gotten off to a great start. For now, our plans are to keep having fun and see where the company will take us.

What do you love most about what you do?

The people. Being able to meet them and have laughs. It's amazing what humor can do. When you find common ground (through BBQ, for example) and everybody can eat, it makes it easier to talk about other issues. It helps people seek to listen not to facilitate a response, but to truly understand.

AT A GLANCE

Farm: Master Blend Family Farms, NC

Certification date: August 2013

Size: 46 acres pasture, 30 acres woodland

Soil type: Sandy soil and dark/rich loam

Altitude: 125 feet

Annual rainfall: 52 inches

Enterprises: 250 Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW hogs; Chester White, Berkshire and Yorkshire genetics

masterblend farms.com



TOP: ERIC WATERS/FARM FLAVOR MEDIA

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'We are very transparent to our customers about how we raise our animals but felt that a third-party audit and certification would be a valuable asset for consumer confidence.'

JAMES AND CHELSEA KEENAN, Keenan Family Farms, Salmon Arm, British Columbia

COVER PHOTO: CLARA BASTIAN

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