

# SUSTAINABLE FARMING

VOLUME 8 | ISSUE 2

FALL 2023 | \$9

## **BALE OUT!** HOW TO PLAN FOR A CRISIS



**PLUS**  
CALCULATING RUMINANT FEED  
TRACEABILITY MATTERS  
SLAUGHTER PLANT SUCCESS



# RESILIENCE



With more frequent severe weather—drought, wildfires, storms, extreme temperatures, flooding—we’re experiencing real-time impacts of climate change. Collectively, we are

challenged to mitigate climate change on a massive scale, all while we learn how to navigate it individually and day by day. Looking back over the last few years, I bet there was a time where you relied on your neighbors and they did the same. There is great importance in community, and the resilience that comes when neighbors help neighbors. We hope you’ll also consider us part of your network. If you’re facing challenges, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

The food labeling landscape continues to be a space in need of strong voices and clear language. California’s Proposition 12, which prohibits confinement of breeding pigs and covers egg-laying hens and veal calves, is increasingly equated with the subjective term, “humane.” While some welfare requirements are arguably better than none, the absence of a crate or cage does NOT equal “high-welfare” management. Similarly, cell-cultured “meat” proponents continue to claim sustainability without any scientific evidence. We cannot let misleading messaging go unchallenged, as it misdirects from real solutions.

In June, USDA announced a proposal to strengthen the substantiation of animal raising claims, and the agency has said it plans to encourage the use of third-party verification.

While we wait to see how this unfolds, it’s a step in the right direction and we will continue to push for transparent label claims, backed by standards and verification.

AGW, in partnership with Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI-USA) and the Soil Health Institute (SHI), was recently awarded a USDA Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities grant (see facing page). This exciting three-year project incentivizes producers to implement climate-smart practices, get Certified Regenerative by AGW, and access growing markets—and we’re now accepting applications! For more information, visit [agreenerworld.org/climate-smart](http://agreenerworld.org/climate-smart)

Our work is made possible by generous supporters, donors, and those who give their time, guidance and expertise. I extend a warm welcome to our newest advisory board members (see page 5), a group of incredibly knowledgeable and committed individuals who represent many facets of the food and farming industry.

AGW’s annual producer survey is one way you can tell us how we’re doing, what you need, ideas you have, and what we can do better. We’re currently analyzing the responses to our 2023 survey, so stay tuned for feedback. Thank you again to everyone who took time out to respond.

**Emily Moose**  
Executive Director  
A Greener World

**Sustainable Farming**  
Fall 2023  
Volume 8 / Issue 2  
Cover price \$9

Editor: Peter Mundy  
[info@agreenerworld.org](mailto:info@agreenerworld.org)

**A Greener World**  
PO Box 115, Terrebonne  
OR 97760

800-373-8806

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SCOTT PALMER RANCHING

## New U.S. regenerative grant project open to applicants

AGW is excited to announce that its Climate Smart Commodities grant project is now accepting applications from farmers in the United States, the USVII, and Puerto Rico.

Funded by the USDA, the ‘Increasing Accessibility to Regenerative Farming Practices and Markets for Small and/or Underserved Producers’ project is a three-year partnership between A Greener World, the Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, and the Soil Health Institute, and seeks to increase regenerative farming practices accessibility and expand markets to small and underserved producers.

“We are excited to work alongside RAFI-USA and the Soil Health Institute to expand opportunities across the supply chain for farms implementing regenerative, climate-smart practices,” says AGW’s Executive Director, Emily Moose. “This project will provide a comprehensive framework for farmers to transition towards regenerative practices, improve their farm operations, gain access to growing regenerative and climate-smart markets, and join a growing network of farmers committed to environmental stewardship.”

Participating farmers will receive a \$1,250 stipend to cover time spent on climate-smart

regenerative farm planning and emissions reduction plan design, with access to additional incentive payments for specific practices. Participating farms will also receive technical assistance and support through RAFI-USA to develop a unique regenerative plan.

“The regenerative plan is the cornerstone of this project, outlining the farm’s road map to maintaining and restoring soil health, biodiversity, water and air quality management, and more,” Moose explains. “The regenerative plan also addresses livestock management, nutrient management, and infrastructure planning, while Certified Regenerative by AGW validates plan implementation and serves as a marketable third-party assurance of improvement of a farm’s ecosystem.”

The project is now open to farmers and ranchers in the U.S., the USVII, and Puerto Rico who have full management and control of their farms, and is best suited to those seeking to achieve clear traceability of their operations and products, fostering transparency and accountability.

To find out more about the enrollment process, visit [agreenerworld.org/climate-smart](http://agreenerworld.org/climate-smart)

## IN THE NEWS...

### MILK FIRST

The a2 Milk Company has launched the world’s first Certified Regenerative by AGW milk products.

Available at Whole Foods Markets and Sprouts, the company’s new Grassfed a2 Milk Whole Milk and Grassfed a2 Milk 2% Reduced Fat Milk come from cows that naturally produce only the A2 protein, offering potential digestive benefits. “As consumer interest in The a2 Milk Company brand continues to grow, adding a Certified Regenerative by AGW, grassfed version is a natural progression,” says an a2 Milk Company spokesperson.

### GENE-EDITED PIGS

Animal genetics company Genus claims to have used gene editing to develop pigs that are resistant to porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS).

Based in the UK, Genus announced that the Colombian government issued a ‘favorable regulatory determination’ for the gene-edited pigs. The company is pursuing regulatory approvals in the US, Canada, China, Japan, Mexico and Brazil, and expects a decision from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration in the first half of 2024.

### PROCESSING GRANT

Meat and poultry processors can apply for new USDA funding to help expand production and create new markets.

An additional \$123 million in grants is now available through the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) phase 2, which is designed to encourage competition and sustainable growth in the U.S. meat processing sector, and to help improve supply chain resilience.

Visit [rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs](http://rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs)

### OUTREACH SPECIALIST

A warm welcome to Ashley Khteian, who joins the AGW team as our new Outreach Specialist.

Ashley (right) brings a wealth of prior experience in the food industry, formerly representing a California-based natural foods broker, as well as in renewable energy, working with both wind and solar projects. For all farms and businesses seeking AGW certification, Ashley is your go-to contact.

Contact Ashley at [ashley.k@agreenerworld.org](mailto:ashley.k@agreenerworld.org)





# IN THE NEWS...

## LOGO-A-GO-GO

AGW-certified product packaging must now display the appropriate program logo, following the introduction of new labeling standards.

From August 2023, the inclusion of the Certified Animal Welfare Approved, Certified Grassfed, Certified Non-GMO, and Certified Regenerative by AGW logos on product packaging is a mandatory element for all certified operations, with limited exceptions upon agreement with AGW.

"Market research shows that consumers are increasingly interested in where their food comes from and how it's produced," explains Katie Amos, Director of Communications and Outreach.

"They are actively seeking assurances on packaging, backed by credible third-party bodies they can trust, like AGW-certified. There is an excellent opportunity for AGW producers to meet the needs of these consumers."

Displaying the AGW logo on product packaging is—collectively—

one of the most effective ways to increase public recognition of the AGW logos and actively promote AGW-certified food in the marketplace, Amos explains.

"However, we realize the new requirements to include AGW logos may entail additional time and cost and, in some cases, there may be valid reasons why a certified business is unable to comply. Please contact us to discuss any potential issues you may have or to agree an appropriate timeline for updating pre-printed packaging, or for assistance in integrating AGW logos into your existing labels or packaging designs. We are here to help."

We are here to help."

*As well as branded stickers, AGW offers a free labeling design service for certified producers. Visit [agreenerworld.org/labeling-support](http://agreenerworld.org/labeling-support)*



## ALL ABOARD

AGW has appointed new members to its advisory board.

Don Jackson of Pompey's Rest, South Carolina; Urvashi Rangan, Chief Science Advisor for GRACE Communications Foundation; Edna Rodriguez, Executive Director of Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA; and Catherine Vo, Director of Product for Zack's Mighty Tortilla Chips join our existing team.

"We are grateful to our board members for contributing their time and expertise towards AGW's ongoing mission," says Emily Moose, AGW's Executive Director.

[agreenerworld.org/about/board](http://agreenerworld.org/about/board)



## AUSTRALIA FIRST

Manna Hill Estate is the world's first olive producer Certified Regenerative by AGW—and the first farm in Australia certified by AGW for regenerative stewardship.

Situated in the Central Highlands in Victoria, Australia, Manna Hill Estate is a small, family run, dry range olive grove, producing and manufacturing award-winning Certified Regenerative by AGW and certified Organic extra-virgin olive oil, table olives, soaps, and skin care balms from around 2,500 olive trees on 90 acres.

"We're committed to producing healthy organic food and skincare products, using farming methods that care for our environment," says Manna Hill Estate owner, Campbell Mercer. "Our focus on regenerative agricultural techniques helped us to win consecutive Gold Medals in the 2020, 2021, and 2022 Australian International Olive Awards competition."

"We chose to certify with AGW because they have a global footprint and their robust certification offers a transparent, independent, third-party validation of our farming techniques and processes. It provides customers with the comfort and assurance that we really are farming how we say we are."

Visit [mannahillestate.com.au](http://mannahillestate.com.au)

## GLOBAL GATHERING

The AGW team attended a two-day training meeting in September in Ontario, Canada.

The meeting, which involved staff from North and South America and Europe, included a farm walk, soil sampling demonstration and numerous planning sessions. "It was hugely rewarding to have this rare opportunity to meet in person, particularly when many of the team work thousands of miles apart," says Katie Amos, Director of Communications and Outreach.



## A SLICE OF SUCCESS

Six Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW cheeses achieved outstanding recognition at the 40th annual American Cheese Society Competition in Des Moines, IA.

Sarah Hoffmann (below) of Green Dirt Farm in Weston, MO, came third place in the Best in Show category for 'Prairie Tomme' sheep's milk cheese and first place in Sheep's Milk cheese aged over 60 days category, as well as first place in the open category made from sheep's milk under American Originals for their sheep's milk 'Dirt Lover.'

Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery in Champaign, IL, won third place in the Feta made from sheep, mixed or other milks category and third place in the Goat's Milk Cheeses fresh rindless goat's milk cheese aged 0–30 days category for their 'Chevre Frais,' as well as second place in the Farmstead Cheeses aged 60 days or more category for their 'Moonglo.'

Awards are given to cheeses and cultured dairy products that have achieved technical excellence and exhibit the highest aesthetic qualities.



## REGENERATIVE 'HOT AIR'

Most major food companies are making "more promises than progress" when it comes to regenerative agriculture, according to a report from the Farm Animal Investment Risk & Return (FAIRR) Initiative.

Assessing 79 global food giants with a combined annual revenue of \$3 trillion, FAIRR found that while 50 (63%) publicly referred to regenerative practices as a solution to the climate crisis and biodiversity loss, two thirds (64%) had not established any form of quantified company-

wide targets for regenerative agriculture and just four had established baselines to measure progress. Only 8% had targets to financially support farmers to adopt regenerative practices.

"The multinational food giants have filled endless press releases with talk of their commitment to regenerative agriculture, but with no agreed definition of the term, it's impossible to measure what progress they're making or hold them to account for failing to keep their promises," says FAIRR Chair and Founder, Jeremy Coller.



## FRANK MORISON

AGW's Lead Auditor and Slaughter Specialist, Frank Morison, passed away in early October after a short illness.

"Frank was a very special member of the AGW team and will be hugely missed," says Emily Moose, AGW's Executive Director. "He was always willing to share his knowledge and experience with his colleagues and particularly enjoyed meeting the farmers and ranchers he went out to audit, with whom we know he was a real favorite."

An avid outdoorsman, Air Force veteran and



experienced farmer, Frank brought a wealth of practical knowledge and experience, as well as a wonderful sense of humor to his work with AGW for over a decade.

Frank is survived by his wife of 38 years, Carole Morison; his son, Frankie W. Morison, Jr. and his wife, Leia; two step-daughters, Natalie Crist and her husband, Kris, and Christy Betts and her husband, Trey; four grandchildren, several nieces and nephews; and two step-brothers, Roman and Peter Bojczuk; and his beloved dog, Freya.

# SUSTAINABLE FARMING

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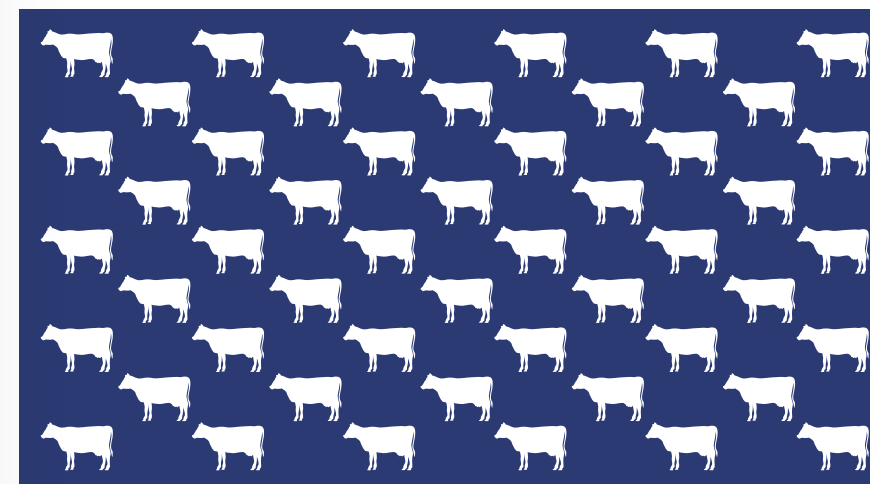
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### Opinion



# MADE IN THE USA

Proposed rule changes could strengthen country of origin food labeling, says Katie Amos

In today's increasingly food-conscious world, consumers expect a label to mean what it says—including the country of origin of the food they purchase. However, the reality is that "Product of USA" and "Made in the USA" claims used on many food products are highly problematic.

It might surprise you to know that the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) rules currently allow products to be voluntarily labeled "Product of USA" if the animal was raised in and imported from another country or if meat products were imported and repackaged in the U.S. This is not only misleading for consumers, but causes financial harm to independent U.S. farmers and ranchers, as companies that process cheap imported meat and package it with a U.S. origin claim can gain significant economic advantage over genuine U.S. producers.

#### A positive change

As an organization dedicated to labeling transparency and committed to helping consumers make informed choices, AGW welcomes the proposed new rule for the "Voluntary Labeling of FSIS-Regulated Products with U.S.-Origin Claims" from the FSIS of the USDA. The new rule would require documentation on file for FSIS to verify that animals were born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the U.S. in order for meat, poultry and egg products to make use of "Product of USA" and "Made in the USA" claims. We strongly support this revision and see it as an opportunity to enhance clarity and transparency in food labeling, which will benefit U.S. consumers and farmers alike.

While the proposed amendment is only voluntary—and we would like to see mandatory country-of-origin labeling in the near future—we

support the change with the following key points and recommendations:

► **Rigorous inspection of documentation:** As the "Product of USA" claim will be voluntary and eligible for generic label approval, AGW urges FSIS to ensure inspection personnel are able to exercise thorough scrutiny of all necessary documentation during the generic approval process. By doing so, they can ensure approved labels are not misleading or inconsistent, thereby safeguarding consumer interests and preserving the integrity of the labeling system.

► **Balancing clarity and consumer confusion:** While offering additional information to consumers, verified origin claims can inadvertently create confusion in the labeling process for producers. Nevertheless, the proposed change does outline the need for clear and specific requirements for labels that carry the authorized claims "Made in the USA" and "Product of USA." AGW encourages FSIS to strike a balance between providing clear information for consumers and avoiding unnecessary complexity in labeling guidelines for producers.

#### Informed choices

Transparent and accurate food labeling is an essential aspect of empowering consumers to make informed purchasing choices, and U.S. farmers should never be disadvantaged in the marketplace from imported products bearing misleading U.S. origin claims. We strongly support strengthening the USDA rule for the use of country of origin claims and the provision of clear guidelines so that we can make a significant stride towards a more transparent food system, benefiting both consumers and farmers in the U.S.

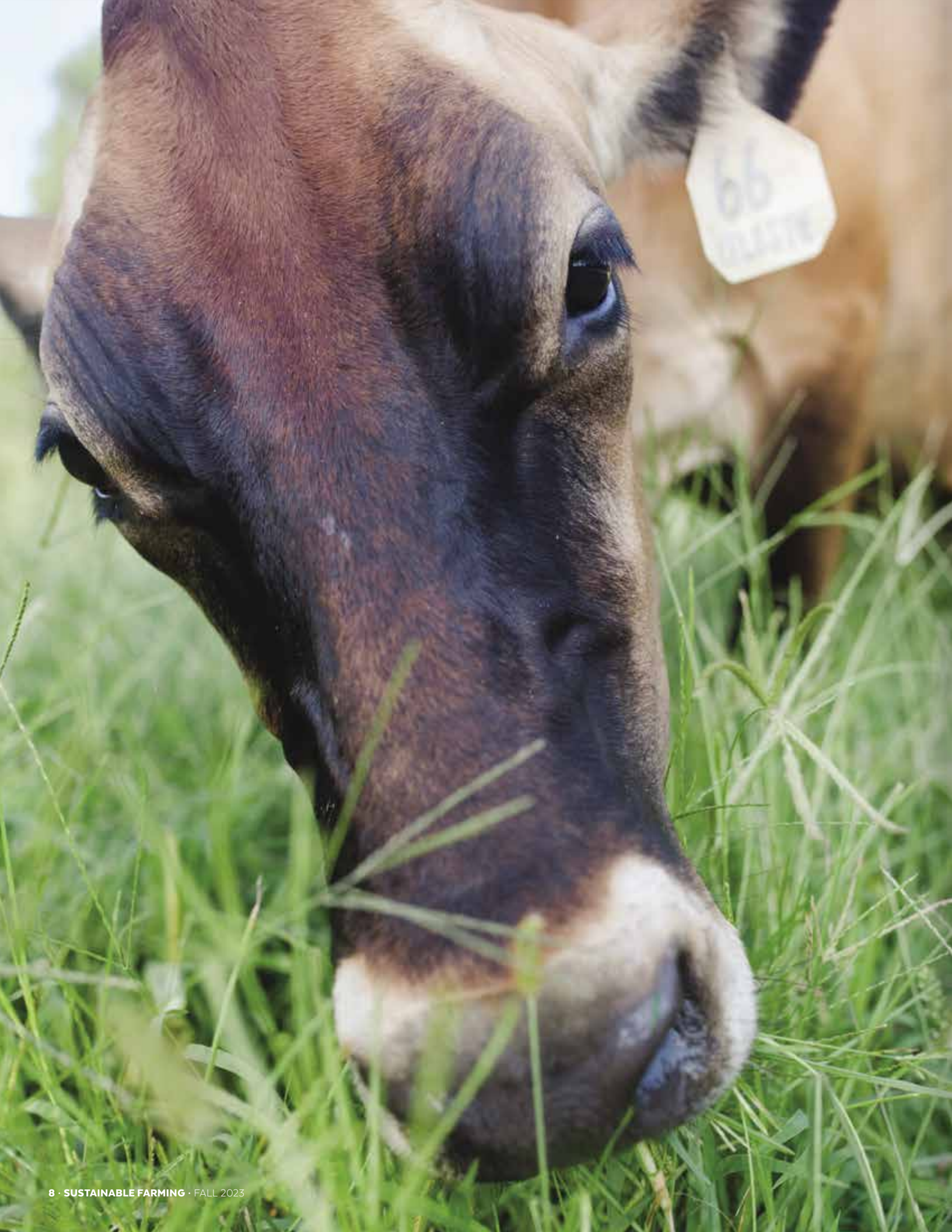
*Katie Amos is AGW's Director of Communications and Outreach*



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Find out more at [agreenerworld.org/donate](http://agreenerworld.org/donate)



# HUNGER GAMES

Anna Heaton looks at the science behind ruminant feed and forage intake

Research shows that feeding ruminants small quantities of grain is not usually harmful. If they are fed large quantities of grain, however, ruminants can suffer from serious diet- and digestion-related problems such as acidosis (a serious form of bovine heart burn that can lead to diarrhea, ulcers, liver disease and general ill health).

Besides being detrimental to animal welfare, feeding grain also raises concerns about livestock competing directly with humans for food sources. On this basis, A Greener World advocates for maximizing grass and forage in ruminant diets for positive welfare, as well as reducing reliance on grains that could otherwise be used for human consumption, specified in the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW standards.

## How much grain?

So how do farmers determine the right balance of feed for ruminants? It all starts with understanding dry matter. Dry matter (DM) is what remains after all water is evaporated from a given feed.

Since different feeds have varying DM content, it is essential to compare them on a like-for-like basis to make accurate calculations. For example, fresh pasture has a much lower DM and a higher moisture content (MC) than an equivalent weight of dry hay.

In order to work out the correct animal intake, compare different feed sources on a like-for-like basis, and then calculate different diets, we need to first work on a dry matter basis, before we work out the fresh weight of different feeds.

The daily dry matter intake (DMI) of ruminants is generally related to their liveweight. The Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW standards provide a simplified approach for different ruminant species, making the calculations (relatively!) straightforward for farmers and ranchers in the program.

## Percentage of body weight equivalent to DMI

- ▶ Beef cattle = 2.5%
- ▶ Non-lactating dairy cattle = 2.5%
- ▶ Lactating dairy cattle = 3%
- ▶ Meat goats and meat sheep = 3%
- ▶ Non-lactating dairy goats and dairy sheep = 3%
- ▶ Lactating dairy goats and dairy sheep = 5%
- ▶ Bison = 2.5%

Using this general information listed in the standards, it is now possible to work out the approximate DMI for individual or groups of similar animals.

## Working out the daily DMI

▶ **Example 1:** A lactating dairy cow weighs 1,000 lb. Her total daily DMI is 3 percent of her body weight (1,000 lb x 0.03 = 30 lb). The cow's total daily DMI will be 30 lb.

▶ **Example 2:** A group of 20 ewes are fed as one group. They weigh between 130-150 lb. with a group average of 140 lbs. Each ewe's daily DMI will be 3 percent of her body weight (140 lb x 0.03 = 4.2 lb). 20 ewes total daily DMI will be 84 lb.

## Using the daily DMI figures

Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW standards limit the amount of non-forage feed that can be given to ruminants for animal welfare reasons (and to avoid livestock competing directly with humans for feed grains).

▶ **Standard 6.1.1** requires that beef cattle, non-lactating dairy cattle, meat goats and non-lactating dairy goats, meat sheep and non-lactating dairy sheep, and bison receive a minimum of 70 percent forage in the diet to ensure proper rumen function.

▶ **Standard 6.1.2** requires that lactating dairy cattle, dairy sheep and dairy goats have a minimum of 60 percent forage in the diet to ensure proper rumen function.

This means that beef cattle, non-lactating dairy cattle, meat goats and non-lactating dairy goats, meat sheep and non-lactating dairy sheep, and bison could receive a maximum of 30 percent of their daily dry matter intake (DMI) in the form of grain and other non-forage feeds. Likewise, lactating dairy cattle, dairy sheep and dairy goats could receive up to a maximum of 40 percent of their daily dry matter intake (DMI) in the form of grain and other non-forage feeds. (Note: standards 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 apply for every day of the animals' lives – **not** the total feed over their lifetime.)

While it is difficult to calculate exactly how much forage a grazing animal might eat on a daily basis, it is relatively easy to work out how much non-forage food is being provided—and what proportion of the daily DMI this comprises.

So, rather than working out how much forage the animal needs to eat each day to remain compliant, it is far simpler to work out the maximum non-forage feed that can be given and ensure animals are not given more than this each day.

## Working examples

To comply with AGW standards, most ruminants should be fed at least 70 percent forage in their diet on a daily basis. (For lactating dairy cattle, dairy sheep, and dairy goats, this percentage should be at least 60 percent.) Rather than focusing on calculating the exact amount of forage consumed each day, farmers can determine the maximum non-forage feed allowed, and ensure the animals do not exceed this limit.

► **Example 3:** A lactating dairy cow weighs 1,000 lb. Her daily DMI is approximately  $1,000 \times 0.03 = 30$  lb. The Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW standard requires at least 60 percent of her daily DMI to be forage, and allows a maximum 40 percent DMI as non-forage feed like grain. So, 40 percent of her 30 lb total daily DMI is  $30 \times 0.4 = 12$  lb. The cow could therefore have up to 12 lb on a DM basis of non-forage feed per day.

► **Example 4:** A group of 20 ewes weigh on average 140 lb. The daily dry matter intake for each ewe is therefore  $140 \times 0.03 = 4.2$  lb. The Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW standard requires at least 70 percent of each ewe's daily DMI to be forage, and allows for a maximum 30 percent DMI as non-forage feed like grain. 30 percent of each ewe's 4.2 lb total daily DMI is  $4.2 \times 0.3 = 1.26$  lb. The group of 20 ewes could therefore be given 25.2 lb dry matter of non-forage feed per day.

## Converting DMI into fresh weight

As already discussed, different feeds have different DM values. Most grains, for example, have an average DM around 85 percent (the remaining 15 percent being moisture). In other words, using example 3 above (the lactating dairy cow weighing 1,000 lb), if the 12 lb dry matter per day of non-forage feed was given as a mix of grains, the 12 lb of mixed grains would represent only 85 percent of the fresh weight of those grains. In other words, more mixed grain could be fed.

► **Example 5:** A 1,000 lb lactating dairy cow has a maximum daily DMI of non-forage feed of 12 lb. The feed is a mix of grains. We know the DM of mixed grains is about 85 percent. The fresh weight of the maximum amount of grain that can be fed to the cow per day is therefore  $12/0.85 = 14.1$  lb.

► **Example 6:** A group of 20 ewes has a maximum daily DMI of non-forage feed of 1.26 lb per ewe (25.2 lb for the group). We know the DM of mixed grain feed is 85 percent. The fresh weight of the maximum amount of grain that can be fed per day is  $1.26/0.85 = 1.47$  lb per ewe per day ( $1.26/0.85 \times 20 = 29.4$  lb for the group per day).

## IF IN DOUBT

By following AGW's standards and calculating feed intake carefully, farmers can ensure the well-being of their ruminant animals while promoting sustainable farming practices. With a focus on maximizing forage and minimizing grain usage, we can support a greener and healthier world for both animals and humans alike.

And if you are ever in any doubt about what you are feeding your animals, please get in touch. We are here to help.

## Non-grain non-forage feeds

If you are intending to use non-grain feeds in the diet, various nutritional charts are available in feed books or online to help determine the dry matter content. For example, [feedtables.com](http://feedtables.com) is an extremely comprehensive resource and provides the dry matter content for most available feeds, including:

- Cottonseed meal = 90% DM
- Beet pulp (dry) = 89% DM
- Dried brewers grains = 92% DM
- Soybean meal = 90% DM

## Putting it all together

The following examples show the ruminant feed calculation process from start to finish.

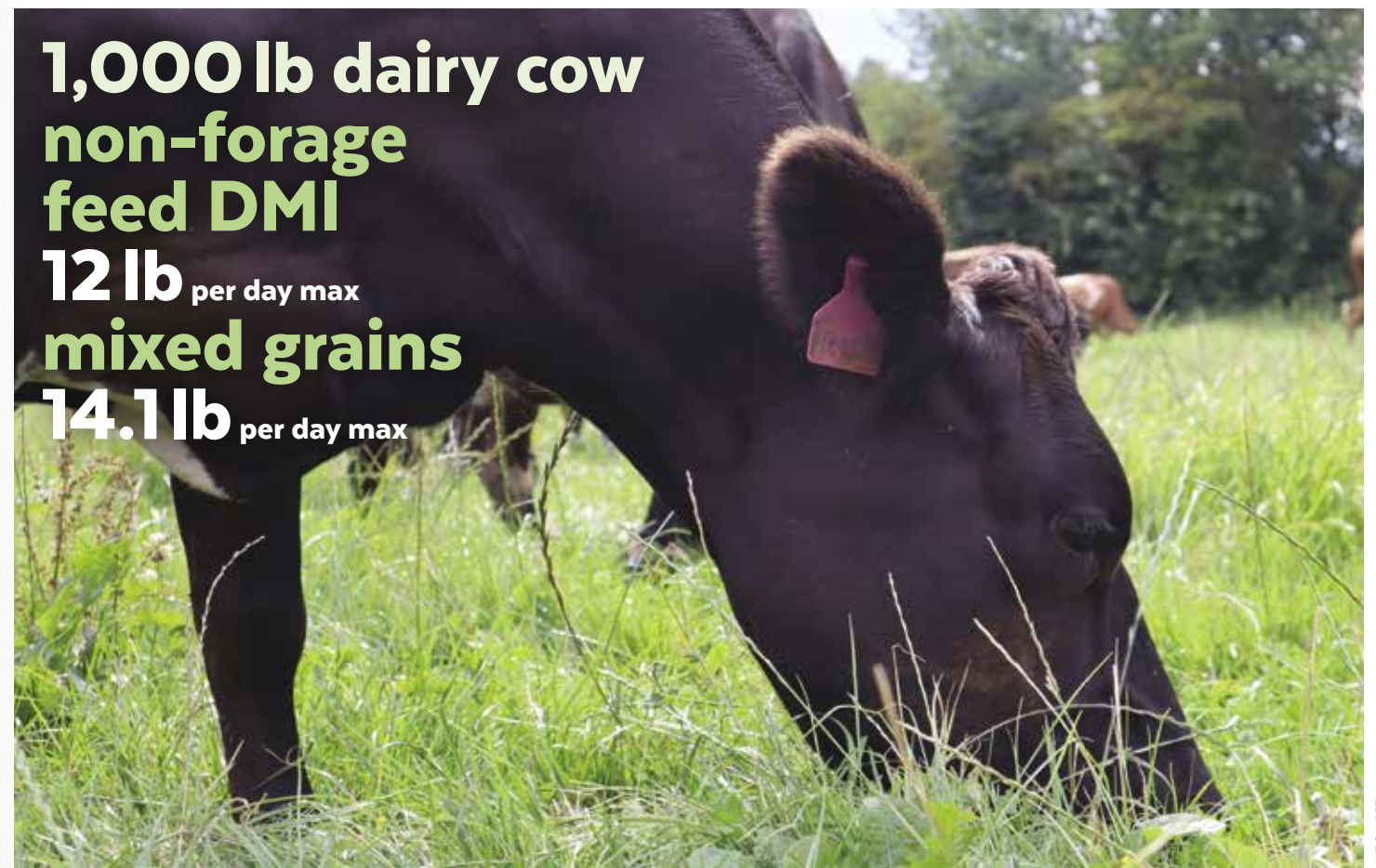
► **Example 7:** How much fresh grain can I feed a 150 lb lactating dairy doe and remain within the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW standards? Looking at the liveweight/DMI table in the standards, the bodyweight to equivalent DMI for a dairy doe is 5 percent. So,  $150 \times 0.05$  gives the estimated total daily DMI of 7.5 lb. The maximum non-forage is  $7.5 \times 0.4$  (40 percent), which equals 3 lb. Fresh grain is 85 percent DM, so  $3/0.85$  gives a maximum fresh weight grain ration for a dairy doe of 3.52 lb per day.

## Letting animals choose their feed

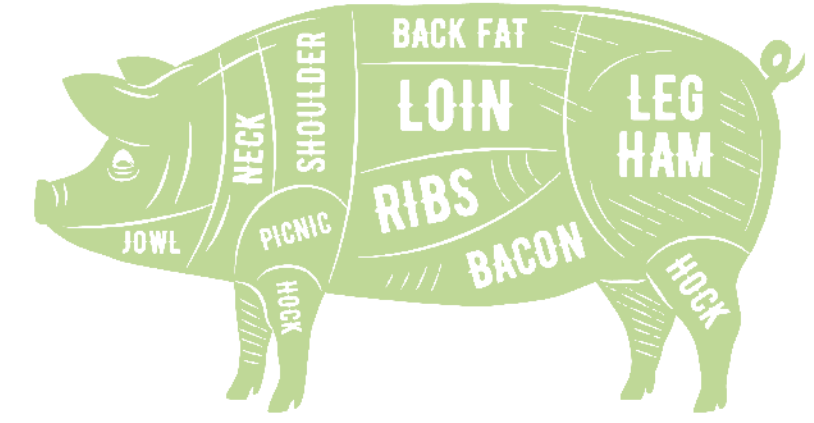
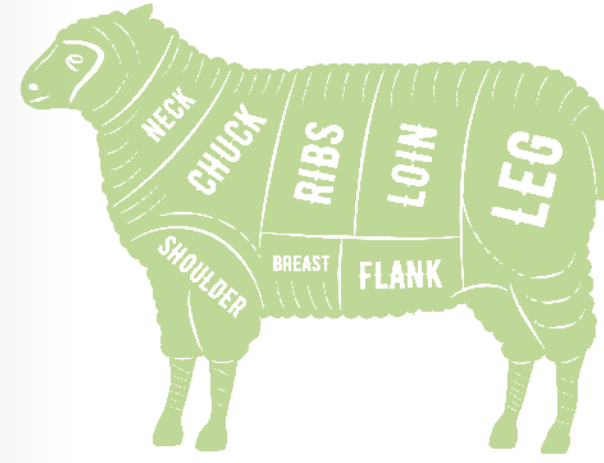
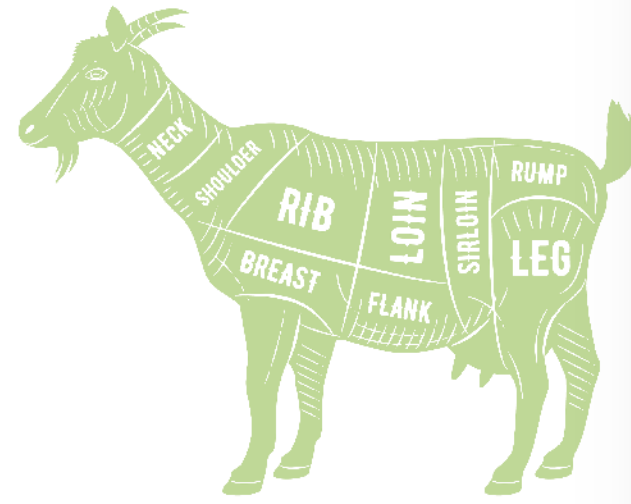
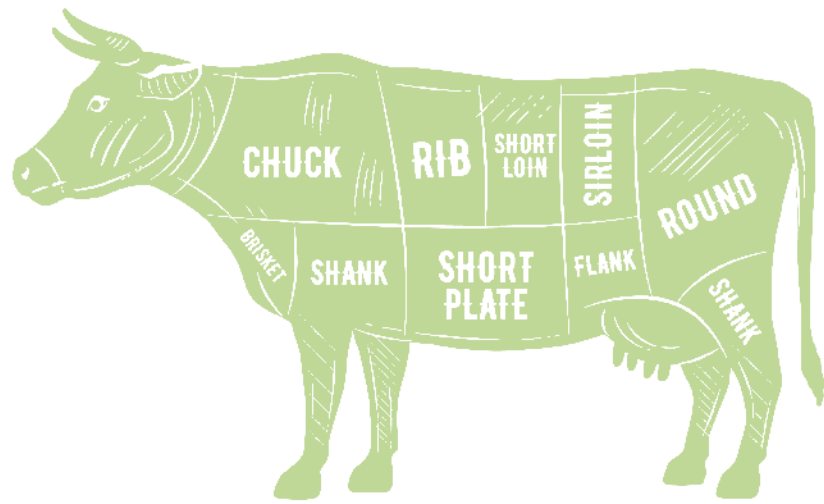
AGW standards remain consistent, whether the farmer measures the feed intake daily or allows the animals to choose freely from troughs or feeders. When using feed hoppers filled less often, it is essential to account for the number of animals in the group and the time between each filling.

► **Example 8:** A group of 20 beef finishers are all fed together in one group. The average weight of the animals is 800 lb and their total daily DMI is 20 lb. The maximum non-forage feed per day is 30 percent of 20 lb = 6 lb. The non-forage feed is a sweetmix with a DM content of 85 percent. The maximum fresh weight of sweetmix per animal per day is:  $6/0.85 = 7.06$  lb. The maximum fresh weight of sweetmix per day for the 20 cattle is:  $7.06 \times 20 = 141.2$  lb. If the feed hopper is only filled once a week the maximum amount of grain that could be given is  $141.2 \times 7$  days = 988.4 lb.

*This article is based on a technical factsheet (TAFS) written by Anna Heaton for Certified Animal Welfare Approved by A Greener World, which provides full reference tables for types and weights of animal. Download at [agreenerworld.org](http://agreenerworld.org)*



# CUTTING IT TOO FINE



Farmers have a vital role to play in improving slaughter plant efficiency, says Charlie Hester

Modern slaughter facilities—especially smaller operations—can face significant challenges when attempting to provide an efficient service to their customers. By understanding the most common challenges that plants may experience, farmers and ranchers can help improve efficiencies at slaughter facilities—and avoid unnecessary delays and costs.

## Slaughter plant challenges

Running a slaughter facility can be financially challenging, particularly for small-scale operations with high overhead costs, including equipment, maintenance and labor, and regulatory compliance. All slaughter facilities must comply with copious regulations and standards set by government agencies, such as the USDA, requiring significant time, training and ongoing financial investments, while fluctuating market prices can make profitability uncertain.

As you might expect, ensuring food safety is critical for slaughter facilities. They must implement stringent procedures and protocols to prevent contamination and the spread of foodborne illnesses, with a regimen of regular testing and equipment inspection. And that's before we consider the actual day-to-day work involved in one of the most stressful and dangerous aspects of meat production.

The work environment is physically demanding and potentially dangerous, requiring specialized training and experience. As a result, finding and retaining skilled labor can be very challenging, particularly in rural areas or regions with limited workforce availability.

AGW-reviewed slaughter facilities must prioritize animal welfare, with proper handling to minimize stress, requiring significant training

to ensure humane handling and treatment throughout the process. Like farms, slaughter facilities must also address the environmental concerns associated with effluent discharge and animal by-products. As we all know, implementing sustainable practices and adhering to environmental regulations can be costly and require ongoing monitoring and mitigation efforts.

It is in the mutual interest of every farmer and rancher to ensure the future viability of local, high-welfare slaughter infrastructure for the benefits of animal welfare AND the viability of their own businesses. So, as customers of slaughter plants, what steps can we individually take to help minimize disruption and improve efficiencies for these essential business partners?

## Scheduling

Most slaughter facilities schedule animals anywhere from three to 18 months out, so early and regular communication with your facility is paramount to ensure your product is available when you need it.

Once you are scheduled in, it is absolutely essential to notify the plant as soon as possible if any circumstances change—including changes in slaughter weight, mortality, and market demand—that make it necessary to cancel. This allows them to fill the slot.

Arriving on time with the animals clean and in appropriate condition is also very important, as most facilities start early in the morning. Should you arrive late, remember slaughter employees get the same pay per hour whether you are on time or late. Similarly, cooler space is often limited, particularly at smaller facilities, and requesting longer hang times without notice creates storage issues. Think how much cooler space a plant that

slaughters 20 beef a day, five days per week, would need to hang carcasses for up to 28 days.

## Cut instructions

To ensure the plant has a clear idea of what cuts you want, most operators will supply a cut sheet in advance. Yet many customers have false expectations about the quantity (and sometimes quality) of meat they will receive from their animal.

A general rule for beef is that after the head, hide, feet, blood, and viscera (internal organs) are removed, the carcass will weigh 50% to 60% of the live weight. This is called 'hanging weight'. The amount of hanging weight is influenced by many factors, such as age, muscle score, genetics, amount of fill, clean vs dirty hide, and so on. Depending on the cuts ordered, you may lose anywhere from 30% to 50% of the hanging weight during processing into final cuts.

Pigs typically have a hang weight of 72% of liveweight and approximately 48% of liveweight for final cut. The final weight depends on size, age, breed, and if skinned or dehaired. Sheep and goats typically have a hang weight of 50%-58% of liveweight and 37% to 40% of liveweight for final cut, again depending on age, breed, grassfed versus grain-fed and so on.

Once the carcass is cut and packaged, the producer will receive anywhere from 400-600 lbs. of packaged meat. The amount greatly depends on what cuts are wanted; ground beef, roast, ribs, or steaks, and the age of the animal. Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) regulations require the removal of the backbone from animals over 30 months, thus eliminating T-bone, porterhouse, and some rib cuts.

A recurring issue arises when meat does not meet the farmers' expectations, with some

farmers insisting they did not receive meat from their animals or even accusing plant workers of shortchanging meat. Remember that most plants now have a highly traceable inventory systems to ensure the animal brought in is the meat going out.

Collecting the final cut product in a timely manner is equally important, as freezer space is a premium. Delays in picking up meat will require additional freezer space and energy to maintain the frozen meat. Remember to ensure you have sufficient space and equipment to safely transport and store the meat for your customers. Contact the facility if you need any advice.

## Labeling

When it comes to labeling your packaged meat, the facility (and you) must comply with numerous regulatory requirements.

The labeling process is sometimes protracted, so it is important to contact the plant facility well in advance and inquire what labeling services they can offer and, if appropriate, what information the facility needs from you. Some facilities may only offer a basic statutory labeling service, or they may require a specific type of label for their machines. You may find that you need to get your packaging labels designed and printed elsewhere, or even apply them yourselves after you collect your packaged meat.

Understanding the challenges that slaughter plants face—and how we can help minimize disruptions and delays as customers—will help to ensure these vital facilities remain available to support the development of the sustainable livestock sector for the future.

Charlie Hester is AGW's Lead Slaughter Specialist

## USING YOUR AGW LOGO

AGW's new traceability standards require producers to display the relevant AGW logo(s) on all certified products, unless agreed with AGW (see news, page 4). The new rules also require producers to ensure their labels are in compliance with the guidelines and are approved by the program.

AGW's marketing team offers a label design service at no cost to certified businesses. Find out more at [agreenerworld.org/labeling-support](https://agreenerworld.org/labeling-support)

# A CLOSER LOOK

Product traceability is vital for certification integrity, says Rob George

An integral part of any successful certification program is its credibility. And the credibility of a certification program is dependent on the traceability of a product right through the certified production system.

Whether it's Organic, Non-GMO, Grassfed, Regenerative or Animal Welfare Approved, consumers rightly expect that if they see a specific logo, then the product has been produced according to the specified standard. In other words, the label is what it is says it is.

## Supply chain complexity

Many supply chains are straightforward: for example, a farm producing beef and then selling cuts of beef to local customers. However, some are more complex, such as a processor selling multi-ingredient products like sausages, pies, corn chips or beverages. And although it is fortunately a rare occurrence, fraudulent substitution of ingredient or product can happen in the world of food manufacturing, both intentionally and unintentionally.

► **Unintentional substitution** is where an ingredient that is certified is accidentally replaced with one that is not certified. This may be due to poor warehouse shelf labeling, for example, or untrained staff using unapproved products or incorrectly labeled products from a supplier.

► **Intentional substitution** is exactly that: when a certified product is fraudulently replaced with an identical or similar product that is not certified to save costs or to fulfill an order at short notice, for example.

GREEN DIRT FARM

Whatever the reason, the integrity of the product and the credibility of the program is lost. When this is discovered, consumer confidence falls; and once consumer confidence falls it is very difficult to earn it back.

This is why the traceability of products within a specific program is so important, and sits at the heart of the AGW standards. It is worth noting that an operator's license may be at risk of being terminated in the most serious of cases if discovered during audit.

## AGW standards

Let's look at the key standards relating to traceability in AGW's various programs.

### ► **Animal Welfare Approved:**

The standards for traceability appear in section 17 of each livestock standards, along with logo use requirements, with standard 17.0.2 stating that "Records must ensure an input/output balance can be carried out on a product with an AGW logo and must be retained for at least two years." In practice at audit, this involves an input/output balance.

An input/output balance means that during the audit, the traceability of the product must be checked from the purchase of the ingredient through to the sale of the final product in order to create the 'mass balance,' which should show that what was produced equals what has been sold minus any wastage, and so on. This traceability exercise has three specific 'sections.'

First, the purchase of ingredients with correct order notes, invoices and delivery notes, as well as seeing physical product having been delivered and



stored in a fridge or on a shelf and so on. Second, product manufacture: for example, the records of making burgers would typically contain the date, a lot or batch number of the ingredient used and the quantity/weight.

Finally, there should be sales records detailing what was sold, to whom, and when. These should match with the production records, and the production records should match with the purchase records, confirming the full traceability of the product in question.

► **Certified Non-GMO:** This program also includes specific traceability standards. Standard 1.7.4 reads that "There must be records for each batch of CNGMO further processed products to enable full traceability of each ingredient covering quantities, lot or batch numbers, sources, dates received and their Non-GMO status." Again, the exercise carried out by the auditor for this program is the same as the traceability exercise covered in the AWA program above.

► **Certified Regenerative:** Finally, traceability standards are also central to this program, with standard 1.0.4 stating "Clear traceability is required from the holding to finished labeled product for any Certified Regenerative products," and standard 12.0.2 stating "Records must ensure an input/output balance can be carried out on a product with an AGW logo and this must be retained for at least two years."

ISTOCK/VOLKANSENGOR

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## Distributors and processors

AGW also carries out audits of distributors and processors. These standards are not a separate program but apply to all existing AGW programs. However, there is a separate audit required for operators who are distributors or processors that goes into a greater level of detail to reflect the complexity of buying in multiple ingredients from multiple suppliers, as well as production.

At audit, records must ensure that AGW-certified products can be traced from arrival at the distributor or processor's site through processing to their final destination.

## Get in touch

Traceability of product certification is vital to product integrity and program credibility, and is therefore of paramount importance when meeting the requirements of the program standards.

If you have any questions regarding AGW standards and traceability, please get in touch. We're here to help.

*Rob George is AGW's International Compliance Director*



# BE PREPARED

Global warming is an ever-increasing reminder that a crisis can occur at any time, but will you be ready if a crisis—of any kind—strikes, asks Jennifer Gravley?

If you're a livestock producer and you can tell the difference between crisis and day-to-day living, then you must be doing some things right!

An emergency is a crisis that develops rapidly and unexpectedly, and requires immediate action. Imagine what would happen if paramedics and rescue teams simply made it up as they went along. They don't! Most of an emergency responder's work centers on training and being prepared for most eventualities. The reality is that safeguarding your livestock—and your very livelihood—against emergencies also requires planning and practice. This article will walk you through major steps in that preparation, using some (hopefully!) amusing examples ...

## Step 8 ► Write an emergency plan

No, step 8 isn't a typo. Discussions of farm emergency preparedness generally center on "make a plan". It's great advice, but what are you actually planning for? And how do you write it? What specific crises might arise unexpectedly? What immediate actions would be necessary, and which options are within the scope of your abilities and resources?

The writing of the emergency plan is actually the *final* step in the process. Before outlining what you will do in an emergency, it is necessary (and helpful) to make sure normal operations are in order. So, let's start from the beginning.

## Step 1 ► Assess risk

The first step in emergency preparedness is to conduct a thorough risk assessment. This means identify potential hazards, such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks, power or equipment failures, and family or personal concerns. How likely is each? How bad would it be if it happened?

As you list the possibilities, you'll begin to see that many different emergencies share the same fundamental solutions. Let's look at a few of the situations you probably just listed to ensure resilience is built into your normal operations.

## Step 2 ► Maintain records

**Scenario:** Your entire crew has just been abducted by aliens, and I'm on my way to your ranch to cover chores. What do I need to do? How will I know if the aliens also took half your herd? No problem: I'll find all that information in your records ... right?!

Take the time to list the number of animals, their locations, feed and water needs, and critical medical information. Consider using ear tags or other robust identification. Up-to-date and accurate livestock records and ID will facilitate efficient assistance, as well as evacuation if needed.

## Step 3 ► Stock up

**Scenario:** You awaken to find your farm surrounded by a shark-infested moat. Neighbors are in the process of constructing a bridge, but will take some time to complete it.

Do you have all the supplies you'll need to get through the next few days? If not, build reserves of feed, water, medications, and bedding, and assemble first aid kits. Consider investing in a generator or alternative backup power source to maintain essential functions during a long outage.

## Step 4 ► Inspect structures

**Scenario:** A giant beanstalk erupts from the ground underneath your barn, raising it high into the air overnight. Will the building withstand the unusual strain and remain intact?

Regularly inspect and maintain livestock housing and infrastructure for structural soundness. Where

possible, take measures to fortify buildings against severe weather conditions, floods or wildfires. Note structural vulnerabilities, to be addressed in your written emergency plan.

## Step 5 ► Practice biosecurity

**Scenario:** A pod of purple people eaters promenaded through your barns yesterday, and now your birds are covered with purple polka-dots.

Are isolation areas available? How will you disinfect the barn? Ensure biosecurity practices are in place for situations such as a disease outbreak, periods of heightened vulnerability due to limited resources, or limited access to veterinary care.

## Step 6 ► Review assessment and first aid

**Scenario:** Outbreaks of purple polka-dot plague are occurring throughout the county, and the vet is unavailable to see your flock today. What now?

Review assessment (see "Health and Safety", *Sustainable Farming*, Summer 2022) and basic first aid so you can quickly gather useful information and make sound medical decisions when expert help is unavailable.

## Step 7 ► Collaborate with responders

**Scenario:** You've called 911 because your livestock guardian alligator is stranded atop the hay elevator again, but the only responding volunteer who has ever run an elevator has no alligator handling experience. Uh-oh!

Before it happens again, invite emergency response personnel to do a walk-through of your operation. Communication with local authorities and veterinarians will help responders recognize possible scenarios, address training gaps, and build resource lists.

## Step 8 ► Write an emergency plan

Many excellent templates exist to help you tailor a well-defined emergency response plan to your farm's unique needs. Pay particular attention to communication, which may include phone trees, two-way radios, social media, and local emergency services. Know how you will stay connected to those who will help coordinate response efforts and keep you informed about any developments.

In addition, be sure to designate shelter areas on and off your farm. Establish locations where animals can be relocated during emergencies, and ensure these areas are secure and can be equipped with sufficient food, water, and bedding.

Your emergency plan should include designated roles for farm staff, and procedures for handling various emergencies—for example, who to contact for assistance, and steps for starting the generator. Ensure that all members of your farm team are familiar with the plan, and practice regularly to ensure a quick and efficient response.

## Think ahead

It is important to remember that the plan you will activate when a critical situation emerges is only one part of emergency preparedness. By conducting risk assessments, maintaining critical information, items, skills, and practices, and connecting with local responders, you can protect your animals and mitigate any potential losses.

Emergency planning doesn't have to be a drag, as even the most absurd "what-ifs" can help test readiness. In cases of alien abductions, giant beanstalks, or myriad other critical situations, preparedness is the key to safeguarding human and animal welfare, as well as the long-term sustainability and success of your farm.

ISTOCK/JUANCRUZDF

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

# PAPER WORKS

We typically get asked three main questions about writing emergency plans, says Tim Holmes

## “Why do we need one?”

The worst time to consider how to address an emergency is when you are in the middle of one. Yes, it might seem like unnecessary paperwork. But over the years we have had feedback from several applicants who had always considered the emergency plan to be a paperwork burden, until the unexpected barn fire or when a severe storm cut the power for over a week. During the crisis, they were grateful to have the emergency plan to help guide them through it all. The plan meant they were ready and clear instructions on how to proceed with addressing the emergency.

There is little time for research or locating resources to solve or lessen the impact of an emergency and still complete all the other tasks necessary to operate a successful farm or ranch. Knowing who to contact or the first steps that you need to take in the face of a crisis is invaluable. Trust us on that.

## “What is considered an emergency and what should the plan cover at a minimum?”

Emergencies vary from the probable to the unpredictable. As a minimum, we want to see all likely emergencies covered in your plan. For instance, we’d expect every emergency plan to consider what to do in the event of fire, essential equipment breakdowns (such as water systems and feed delivery), as well as transportation and power failure. What steps will you take to safeguard human and animal welfare?

Other emergencies could include drought, flood, extreme heat or cold, or severe storms. If something is quite likely to occur (once every 3-5 years) that could have a major

influence on the welfare and operation of the farm, then it is a good idea to plan for it. While we encourage producers to plan as much as possible—even for the less likely events—we don’t expect you to include very rare or unlikely emergency situations, such as alien abductions. (Unless you farm near Area 51.)

Your plan should include contact information for key personnel, your veterinarian, local fire services, utility suppliers, and feed company, as well as a mechanic or back-up providers of transportation in event of breakdowns. When detailing possible situations such as fire you would want to identify possible risks, steps to take to protect your animals during the event, and how you would provide alternative shelter and resources afterwards. An emergency plan for drought should include a protocol that covers when to possibly start importing food and water or culling, what animals to cull first, and how resources are evaluated to make these decisions.

## “Do you have an emergency plan template?”

Yes. You’ll find a Farm and Health Plan template for the various species we certify on our website under the ‘For Farmers’ menu. If the website is not an option, just let us know and we can mail the templates to you. We’re here to help.

ISTOCK/DESIGNER481



Emergency Plan

Tim Holmes is AGW’s Director of Compliance

## Certification news

# 10 YEARS OF GLOBAL EXCELLENCE

We’re proud of our unique ISO/IEC 17065 approval. But what does it mean? Julie Walker explains

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) publishes and develops international standards, ranging from quality and environmental management to security compliance. Standard 17065 addresses requirements for organizations certifying products, processes and services.

### Sounds familiar?

ISO itself does not provide certifications, so we pay for an independent third party certifier (IOAS, Inc.) to conduct our assessment. So, just as AGW annually audits farms and other operations to our standards, we are also audited once a year to the ISO/IEC 17065 standards.

AGW’s annual audit includes reporting, file checks and a physical witness audit with at least one of our certified operations. The goal of the accreditation is to give confidence to clients, consumers and other organizations that AGW’s certification process is competent, trustworthy and impartial.

### What’s involved?

The audit covers a wide array of questions:

- ▶ Is AGW a legal entity, with sufficient financial resources to operate? Does it have a legal agreement with its operators, and legal authority over its labels in the marketplace?
- ▶ Can AGW demonstrate that it conducts activities impartially and confidentially?
- ▶ Does AGW have a training program for its staff, including records and annual assessments?
- ▶ Is the certification process (from application to audits to the final decision, including suspensions and terminations) transparent and does it follow all of the specified timelines?
- ▶ Are complaints and appeals recorded and addressed correctly?
- ▶ Is the management system robust and efficient?

Julie Walker is AGW’s Director of Operations

AGW is required to have detailed policies and procedures for our certification activities, as well as an active quality control team that monitors internal checks and balances. We actually conduct annual “internal audits” to make sure we comply with all of the 17065 standards. If we identify a “non-compliance” within our quality system, we must issue ourselves a report and follow up with a corrective action and a plan for preventing the action from reoccurring. (For example, if a public document is not up to date, we record that instance and identify a method of ensuring that all documents are updated correctly going forward.)

Our ISO audit also includes operator file checks, where the assessor randomly selects any certified farm or facility and reviews the selected operators’ application, audit, compliance report, certification decision and any issued certificates. All documentation must be organized and ready to present at our ISO audit.

### Compliance report

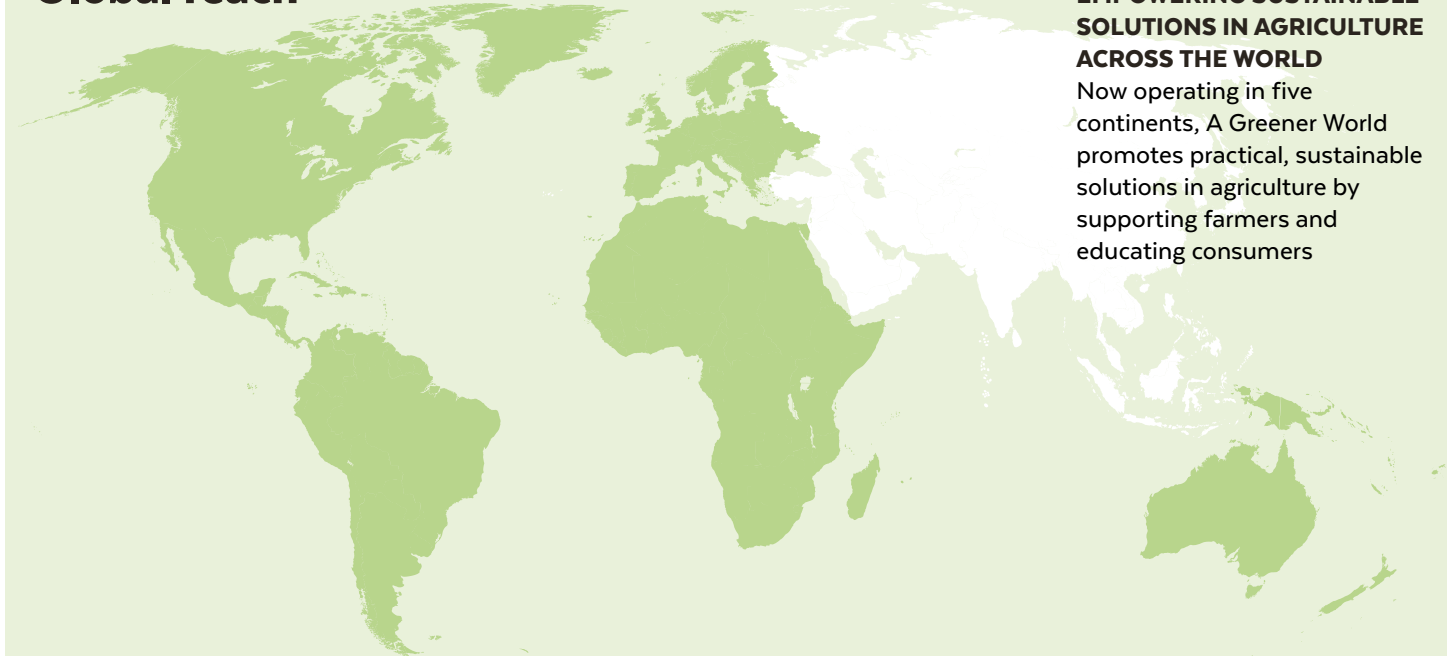
Once the annual assessment is complete, IOAS alerts us of any non-compliances and/or opportunities for improvement. We then send IOAS a report, including a root-cause analysis for each issue raised. AGW receives an updated certificate annually.

We are proud to be the only farm animal welfare program in the U.S. certified according to this internationally recognized quality assurance standard. This means your own AGW certification is backed by a globally recognized accreditation for certifiers, guaranteeing excellence in the auditing and certification process.

*The certificate is issued within the scope of the accreditation issued by the IOAS to ISO/IEC Guide 17065. Registration number 83.*

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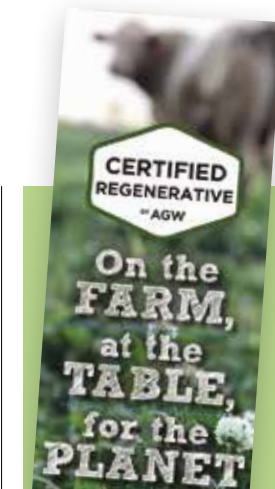
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🌱 Meet the farmer

# JUMP FOR JÓIA

Wendy Johnson and Johnny Rafkin own Jóa Food Farm near Charles City in northeast Iowa, raising Certified AWA and Certified Grassfed by AGW sheep and selling directly to consumers through the farm and through their wool bedding business, Counting Sheep Sleep Company.

**How did you get into farming?**

I grew up on a farm just a few miles from where we now live. After moving to California for college, I worked in the fashion industry for over a decade before I decided I wanted to be a farmer. I realized I wanted a more meaningful connection to food production and to improve water quality and soil health, and mitigate climate change. Johnny hails from southern California and when he met me, he had no idea he would end up living in Iowa! But in 2010 we left LA to live a life filled with intention and genuine purpose. We've never looked back.

**What do you farm?**

We steward 135 acres of perennial forage, trees and shrubs, and Kernza, a perennial wheatgrass for grain and forage, regenerating land after 100 years of corn and overgrazing in a riparian zone. We raise AWA-certified sheep, as well as cattle, pigs, chickens, and turkeys, growing trees for hardwood and nuts and shrubs for berries and wildlife. Over half the farm is certified organic and the rest is in transition. We're passionate about marrying regenerative and organic practices.

**Describe a typical day**

Every day is different! Over the last eight years

we've built up our infrastructure and skills, so we're far more preventive and proactive. We also quickly realized we make more money with me in the office, so I spend half my time marketing, bookkeeping, networking, and strategizing, and the other half helping Johnny. He loves to keep moving, staying busy physically, so he does the morning paddock moves and keeps the farm organized.

**How did you hear about AGW?**

I've long recognized the importance of ruminants in the prairie ecosystem and knew that if I was ever to raise food animals, I would raise them humanely. Any farmer can say they're humane, but a certification speaks volumes. AGW stood out for their high welfare and environmental standards. It's opened up new markets for us, too.

**Sustainable farming: why does it matter?**

This year was a great example. We've had only six inches of rain since May 1 and just officially entered a D2 drought. Driving around, I see overgrazed pastures and livestock removed from the land because there is no forage. Yet our forages are still green and growing, and we're still grazing. Keep the right number of animals and allow the land to rest, and it will bounce back quickly.

**What is the biggest threat to the sustainable farming movement?**

Subsidized cheap food. Price is a huge deal for consumers. Subsidy reform is vital for sustainably farmed products to be affordable to the masses.

**AT A GLANCE**

**Farm:** Jóa Food Farm  
**Certification date:** December 2017  
**Size:** 135 acres (45 acres Kernza, 55 acres pasture, plus wetland, silvopasture, micro-orchard/windbreak, riparian buffers)  
**Soil type:** Clay loam  
**Annual rainfall:** 36 inches  
**Enterprises:** Certified Animal Welfare Approved and Certified Grassfed by AGW sheep

[joiiafoodfarm.com](http://joiiafoodfarm.com)



JÓIA FOOD FARM (x2)



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“There are so many buzzwords these days and our Certified Regenerative by AGW status helps to separate those that just claim they are regenerative from those that are—and have the verification to back it up.”

Brian Park of Park Farming Organics, Meridian, CA

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