

Adventures in Pasture-based Agriculture: Opportunities, Obstacles and Outlook

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Overview

- Introduction
- Selected Literature: Why Pasture-based Agriculture Matters
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion and Recommendations
- Conclusions

Introduction: Pasture-based Agriculture

- Can include meat, poultry, dairy, eggs
- No universal definition or dividing line
- Currently a niche
 - Supports small/medium farms
 - Connects consumers
 - Widely seen as good for environment and animals
- Motivation for expanding and enhancing market

Selected Literature

Studies indicate that PBA:

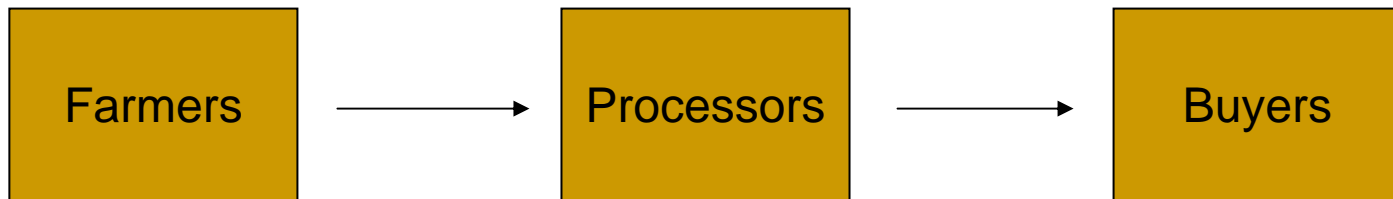
- ✓ Offers attributes demanded by consumers, not available elsewhere, commanding premium
 - Product traits; animal/ecological stewardship
- ✓ Is viable for small/medium farms
 - Higher profit per animal; less debt, risk
- ✓ Small/medium farms good for rural communities
 - Socially and economically

However,...

Is not well-served by commodity markets

Need to coordinate market and distribution to realize benefits

This study: understand current supply chains for differentiated PB products, with eye toward opportunities/constraints to expansion



Methods

Interviews with agents from each supply “link”

- Purposeful sampling: recommendations from MSUE hay/grazing Area of Expertise, “eat wild” website; sell to/work with
- Open-ended questions: taped, transcribed, coded as study progressed

| Agent Type | Number | Comments |
|------------|--------|---|
| Farmers | 16 | 3 dairy; 3 beef; 1 poultry; 1 sheep; 8 “mixed” |
| Processors | 8 | 7 USDA, 1 “exempt” |
| “Buyers” | 6 | 2 distributors, 2 retail, 2 chefs |

Overview of Results

Farmers: Direct and local markets

Values: stewardship, community

Processors: Scale used by individual farmers

Vital but threatened link

Buyers: Sourcing local and specialty products

Want to source locally (and do), but...

Results: farmer interviews

Entrepreneurship and Promotion: Food with a Story

- ❑ Variety of terms used (natural, grass-fed, etc.)
- ❑ Emphasize design of God or nature
- ❑ Animal welfare and comfort, decrease stress
- ❑ “We eat it, so we know it’s safe”
- ❑ Consumers include: W.A. Price members, cancer survivors/doctor referrals

Results: farmer interviews (continued)

Good Life, Good Neighbors

- ❑ High quality of life
- ❑ Not get rich; earn viable family income, grow affordable food
- ❑ Good relationships with (non-farm) neighbors: no odor or flies; cute animals, quaint setting



Processor Results

Vital Service Vulnerable:
Family business, or began
to fill perceived need

- ❑ Surviving, not thriving?
- ❑ Partners with farmers
- ❑ Value humane treatment
- ❑ See USDA inspection as good
- ❑ Sell to family and friends
- ❑ Perceive increased demand for “food with face”
- ❑ Labor issues: benefits, seasonality, training



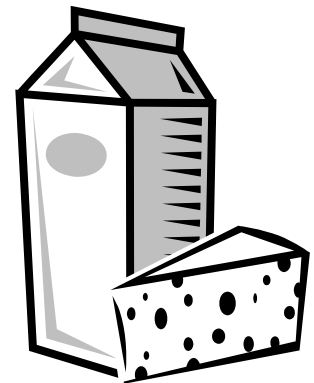
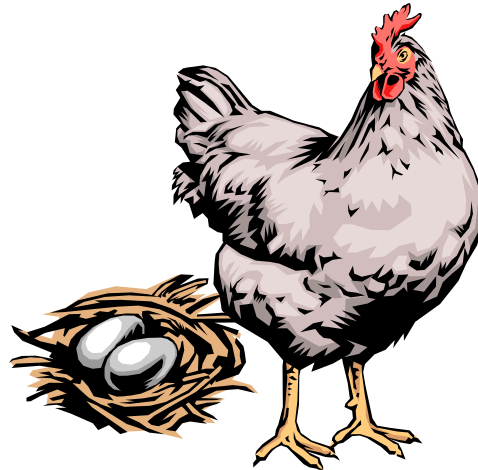
“Buyer” results

- ❑ Clear market segments: specialty vs. general public
- ❑ Want to source locally, but hard to do
- ❑ Brokers can solve marketing/sourcing issues
- ❑ Seasonality issues



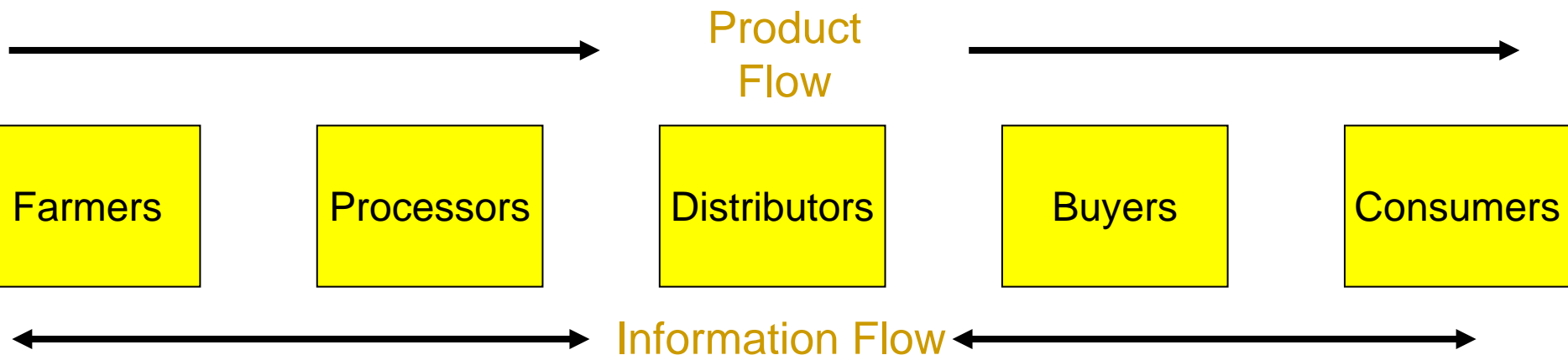
Discussion : Opportunities, Obstacles, Outlook

- ❑ The Value is in the Values: bundle of attributes (health, sustainability, animal welfare)
- ❑ Convenience, Connection, Consistency
- ❑ Grow the Niche? Go Mainstream? Or Both?
How to De-commoditize Agriculture?



Conclusions

- ❑ Valuable niche, ready for growth
- ❑ Promotion and production research needed
- ❑ Avoid creating commodity market: build relationships, partnerships, “Values-based Value Chains”



Thank You!

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questions or
comments:

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