

New Mobile Poultry Processing Unit Coming On Line in Spring 2014

MOUNT VERNON, WA – Pastured poultry has long been recognized as a viable enterprise for diversified family farms. In order to access markets, farmers must have their birds processed. Whether direct marketing, retail, or wholesale, there are specific processing regulations that must be followed and stringent guidelines for the facilities used.

For most small and mid-sized producers, legal options for processing birds, in any form beyond just whole and sold on the farm, meant transporting birds to a local custom slaughter facility, or going to the expense of building a facility on-farm. With the closing of the last remaining northwest Washington custom processor in October last year, local poultry businesses not already possessing their own processing facility are faced with either building a licensed facility and obtaining costly product liability insurance, or shutting down operations altogether.

Now a new option is coming on line, just in time for spring harvest: a fully staffed, self-contained, WSDA-certified Mobile Poultry Processing Unit or “MPPU” is under construction, thanks to funding from the Whatcom Community Foundation’s Sustainable Whatcom Fund. Driving this project forward is the Northwest Agriculture Business Center, the staff of which has completed feasibility, business and marketing plans, brought funding partners and farmers together, and performed extensive research demonstrating the need and sustainability of a MPPU as a stand-alone business entity. To be eligible to use this unit, producers will need to have a WSDA Food Processors License, and complete a training workshop. The unit itself will carry liability insurance, allowing poultry producers to acquire coverage through their individual farm policy.

With the arrival of the new MPPU, producers in northwest Washington will have access to convenient, legal, on-farm processing, enabling them to enter the marketplace with upscale product to supply the burgeoning demand for “locally-grown” foods. Further, this unit will not only service poultry producers (including waterfowl and game birds), the line will also be equipped to efficiently and legally process rabbits. For more information about the MPPU project, please contact the NABC home office at 360-336-3727 or info@agbizcenter.org.

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NABC was created as a response to a critical need for a single regional business support organization focusing on practical, hands-on technical assistance for the development and expansion of new and existing agricultural businesses. NABC is involved in producing or supporting value-added products and services that will tip the balance toward profitability for many of the small and mid-sized farms in the five county region of the NABC. The NABC, as a five county organization including Island, San Juan, Skagit, Whatcom and Snohomish counties, is positioned to take advantage of economies of scale, linking knowledge and financial resources across county lines.

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