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\$5 Million Available for New Arkansas Meat and Poultry Processing Grant Program

LITTLE ROCK, AR – The Arkansas Department of Agriculture has received \$5 million in CARES Act funding for a Meat and Poultry Processing Grant Program. The program was created to support new and existing meat and poultry processing facilities with less than 200 employees, address supply chain disruptions, and mitigate health and environmental impacts as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The program proposal was reviewed and approved earlier this week by the CARES Act Steering Committee and the House and Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development. The appropriation for the program was subsequently approved by the Arkansas Legislative Council.

Project proposals should aim to improve food supply resilience through increasing livestock and poultry slaughter, expanding meat or poultry processing capacity, or promoting worker safety as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Grant awards may reimburse up to 90 percent of eligible expenses for workforce assistance, equipment, capital improvements, and other eligible costs incurred from March 1, 2020 through November 30, 2020. Applications must be received no later than September 30, 2020. Program guidelines and the application can be found [here](#).

“This cost share program will help address the lack of local, small-scale meat processing capacity in Arkansas that limited our producers’ ability to meet consumer demand for locally grown meat products during the COVID-19 related disruptions,” said Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward. “Expanded processing capacity will build resilience within the industry and provide benefit to producers, consumers, and our rural communities.”

Disruptions to the nation’s food supply chain and the reduction in meat processing capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted Arkansas’s need for regionalized, smaller-scale meat processing facilities that producers and consumers can access during normal and emergency situations. Arkansas consumers are demanding more locally grown and processed meat, but the demand currently cannot be met by Arkansas livestock producers due to the limited number and capacity of USDA inspected facilities. There are currently three local, small-scale USDA-inspected meat processing facilities and approximately 40 custom-exempt processors in Arkansas.

Arkansas ranks 10th in the nation in the value of animals and animal products that provide more than \$5.6 billion to the state’s economy annually. In the 2019 production year, Arkansas was ranked 10th in the nation in beef cow inventory and 25th in the nation in cattle and calves with 510,641,000 pounds of production.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit agriculture.arkansas.gov.