



Asa Hutchinson
Governor

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Wes Ward
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 10/4/2022

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Governor Hutchinson and Arkansas Department of Agriculture Announce State Meat Inspection Program

LITTLE ROCK, AR – Today Governor Asa Hutchinson, state legislative members, agriculture industry leaders, and the Arkansas Department of Agriculture announced approval of the state meat inspection program, finalized in a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). The state meat inspection program will allow the Department to inspect meat products for shipment within Arkansas.

Arkansas joins 28 states participating in FSIS’s State Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) programs. These programs allow state inspectors to ensure program enforcement and regulatory compliance in small establishments operating within the state. The MPI programs must develop, administer, and enforce requirements “at least equal to” those set forth in the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA).

“In 2020, the food supply chain was disrupted, and Arkansas’s meat production was severely limited. The creation of the Arkansas Meat and Poultry Processing grant and the State Meat Inspection Program will provide a much-needed boost to our processing capacity,” Governor Hutchinson said.

“The overwhelmingly approved bipartisan program is a great opportunity for not only producers, but also consumers. It’s a great day to be a beef farmer in the state of Arkansas,” said Representative Deann Vaught.

“The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance is thrilled to see the completion of this legislation,” said Michelle Shope, Food Sourcing & Logistics Director, Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. “Proteins are one of the hardest foods for families to afford and are in high demand at food pantries. Increasing certified processors in our state helps us reduce our transportation costs and allows efficient distribution through our member food banks.”

“This program is important for our livestock producers. Joining the State Meat and Poultry Inspection program and expanding the market for their products will help smaller producers maintain profitability,” said Dan Wright, secretary-treasurer, Arkansas Farm Bureau.

“The Arkansas State Meat Inspection program is the realization of multiple years of hard work by Arkansas cattle producers,” said Arkansas Cattlemen’s Association (ACA) President Phillip DeSalvo. “This program gives Arkansas cattle producers the means to ensure complete control of their product from pasture to plate. The ability for producers to market Arkansas beef to Arkansas consumers is a vital revenue source for some producers. In a time of continuing economic instability, this program will be beneficial to all Arkansans. The ACA would like to thank Governor Hutchinson for his support of this program as well as Representative Deann Vaught and Senator Ricky Hill for their unwavering support and dedication in making this a reality.”



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“The state meat inspection program exists to increase the availability of locally-sourced meat and meat products to Arkansans and ensure that all products are safe and wholesome,” said Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward.

The need for additional meat processing capacity was highlighted by food supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. In 2020, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture worked with industry stakeholders to receive and distribute \$10.4 million in funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act through a Meat and Poultry Processing Grant Program. Subsequently, the Arkansas legislature passed Act 418 during the 2021 legislative session to create a state meat inspection program within the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

Since December 2020, Arkansas’s in-state processing capacity has grown by more than 5 million pounds per year. The processing capacity is expected to continue to grow under the new state meat inspection program due to increased marketing and economic opportunities for local producers.

For more information on program requirements or to apply, visit agriculture.arkansas.gov/arkansas-meat-inspection-program/.

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/.