



CALL FOR LOCAL MEAT AND POULTRY ANSWERED

N.C Farmers Respond to Growing Market

RALEIGH – Consumer demand for locally produced foods is encouraging more farmers to produce pasture-raised meat and poultry, according to [NC Choices](#), a [Center for Environmental Farming Systems](#) initiative that promotes sustainable food systems through the advancement of local, pasture-based animal production, processing and marketing.

NC Choices points to the increase in the number of farmers it works with (45, up from 10 when the initiative launched in 2005) as well as the number of farmers who are licensed to sell meat directly to consumers.

“Today, there are more than 330 meat producers selling directly to consumers,” said Casey McKissick, coordinator for NC Choices. “This is a three-fold increase over the past 6 years; the market for local foods is strong, and growing stronger.”

Sales in natural and organic meat, which represent approximately 2% of total red meat sales, are forecast to increase at an annual rate of 11.3% through 2012, a much greater rate than total red meat sales sold according to market research conducted by the Mintel Group.

In response to the increase in participating farmer and consumer interest, NC Choices recently revamped its [website](#) to provide updated farmer profiles and contact information for pasture-based meat producers throughout North Carolina. It also spotlights N.C. Department of Agriculture (NCDCA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) meat processing facilities, contains an embedded Google map that enables the user to geographically search for producers or processors and hosts a calendar of educational workshops and events focused on local, pasture-based meat production and marketing.

NC Choices is committed to supporting farmers and consumers through education and outreach. For more information and to learn how to become involved in NC Choices, contact Casey at 828-216-2966 or casey@ncchoices.com

About the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS): CEFS is a partnership between North Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services. Its mission is to develop and promote food and farming systems that protect the environment, strengthen local communities and provide economic opportunities in North Carolina and beyond. As one of the nation’s most respected centers for the study of environmentally sustainable farming systems, CEFS has focused on advancing the scientific research base necessary to enable farmers to successfully adapt to emerging ecological issues and market trends. CEFS has also developed a strong outreach and education program that reaches out to all North Carolina residents. CEFS recently published “[From Farm to Fork: A Guide to Building North Carolina’s Sustainable Local Food Economy](#).” The Action Guide provides goals and strategies to put North Carolina on the fast track to achieving a sustainable local and regional food system.