



SEEKING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO FARM ANIMAL HARVESTING FOR SMALL FARMS

A Market Study for New Government-Inspected Services in South Texas

Funded by Padilla Farms LLC (Harlingen, Texas)
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Lastly, the author thanks Padilla Farms LLC for entrusting Soluciones with the formidable task to conduct this study that is intended to support any current or future collaborative efforts in South Texas to establish new slaughter and processing services. Padilla Farms and the other small producers proposed to AMS-USDA that this work be conducted because of a long-standing inequitable lack of access that disproportionately burdens smaller-scale farmers and ranchers.

Their initiative was the impetus to propose the creation of this market study. The author intends for it to be useful for farmers, collaboratives, investors, and decision-makers evaluating regional gaps in access to services that disproportionately harm smaller agricultural producers. The author's aim is that the work will lead to proactive financial and governmental support for projects and collaboratives. With such support, producers can focus on producing and move from concept to construction and operation of new meat processing establishments in South Texas.

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- Survey - English Language
- Survey - Spanish Language
- Survey Pushcard/Information Card
- Sample Newspaper Ads
- Sample Newspaper Articles
- Sample Press Release

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Padilla Farms, LLC (dba Yahweh’s All Natural Farm and Garden) is a farm in Harlingen, Texas in the four-county Lower Rio Grande Valley of the southernmost region of the state. It hired Soluciones Consulting in December 2021 to conduct a South Texas agricultural market study for a project funded through a grant awarded to Padilla Farms by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) under the Regional Food Systems Partnerships (RFSP) Program.¹ The purpose of the market study was to evaluate the lack of local access to government-inspected farm animal slaughter and processing services.

For years, Padilla Farms and other small farms and ranches in the Lower Rio Grande Valley along the Texas-Mexico border have endured lack of local access to services. Specifically, they must transport their animals 225 miles one way to Poth, Texas (southeast of San Antonio) to access USDA or state government-inspected services. Farmers must then incur the expense and time of making a second trip to pick up meat products from one of two processors located in that small rural community in Wilson County.

What was not known was whether other farmers and ranchers in the other 21 counties south of San Antonio² faced this same burden. Accordingly, the scope of the study was expanded to evaluate the other regions that comprise “South Texas” beyond the Rio Grande Valley. This broader evaluation would enable a more comprehensive review of potential sites for future processing sites if the need for services was verified to support the operation of a future site or sites. In addition, the evaluation would enable a fuller assessment of the potential for small producer collaboration through a farmers’ cooperative or other type of partnership.

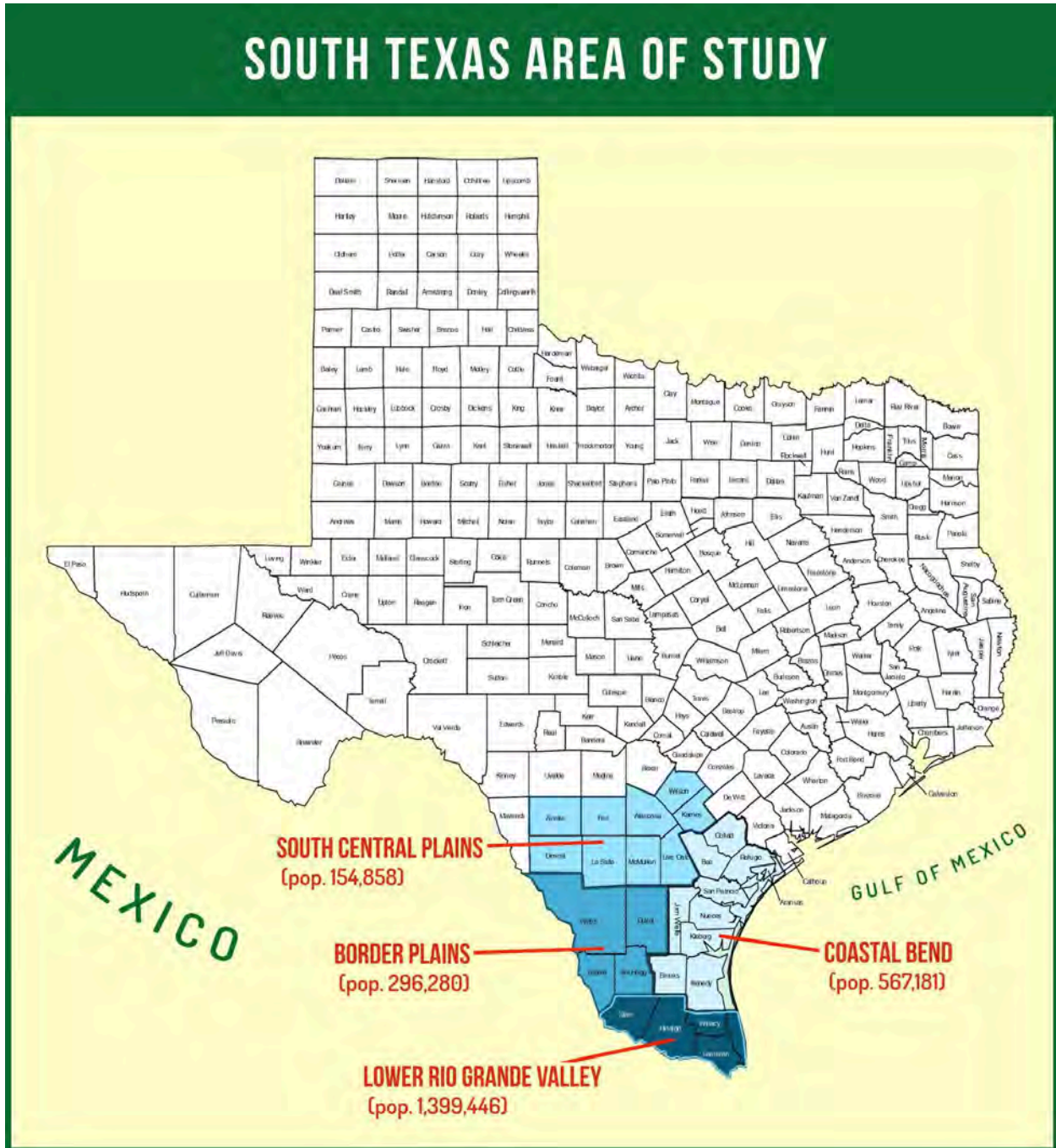
Below is a map distinguishing these regions of the 25 county-region south of San Antonio. The study used four regions to facilitate discussion in the study. The counties that comprise these geographic regions have proximity to each other, share common physical and landscape features, share commonalities of interest in farming and ranching, and have similar challenges to access services related to agricultural production.

Normally, all areas south of San Antonio including San Antonio itself have historically used “South Texas” to describe themselves. The names selected for these distinct regions distinguish each other through a name used historically for that region or was created for this study to describe the geographic location of the counties that comprise the region. Map 1 below illustrates these distinct regions.

¹ Award# AM21RFSPTX1011-00.

² Even businesses, public leaders, and the public in San Antonio describe themselves as “South Texas” even though geographically the city is located in what is more accurately described as Central Texas.

Map 1. South Texas Area of Study



CURRENT ACCESS TO SERVICES

Map 2 below illustrates the current businesses that provide government-inspection services for the slaughter *and* processing of farm animals.³ Farmers that raise animals for meat production to sell their meat products must use one of these sites or a site located elsewhere in Texas. Further details are provided in Table 1 below to identify where a smaller producer can receive services.

Map 2. Current Government-Inspected Services

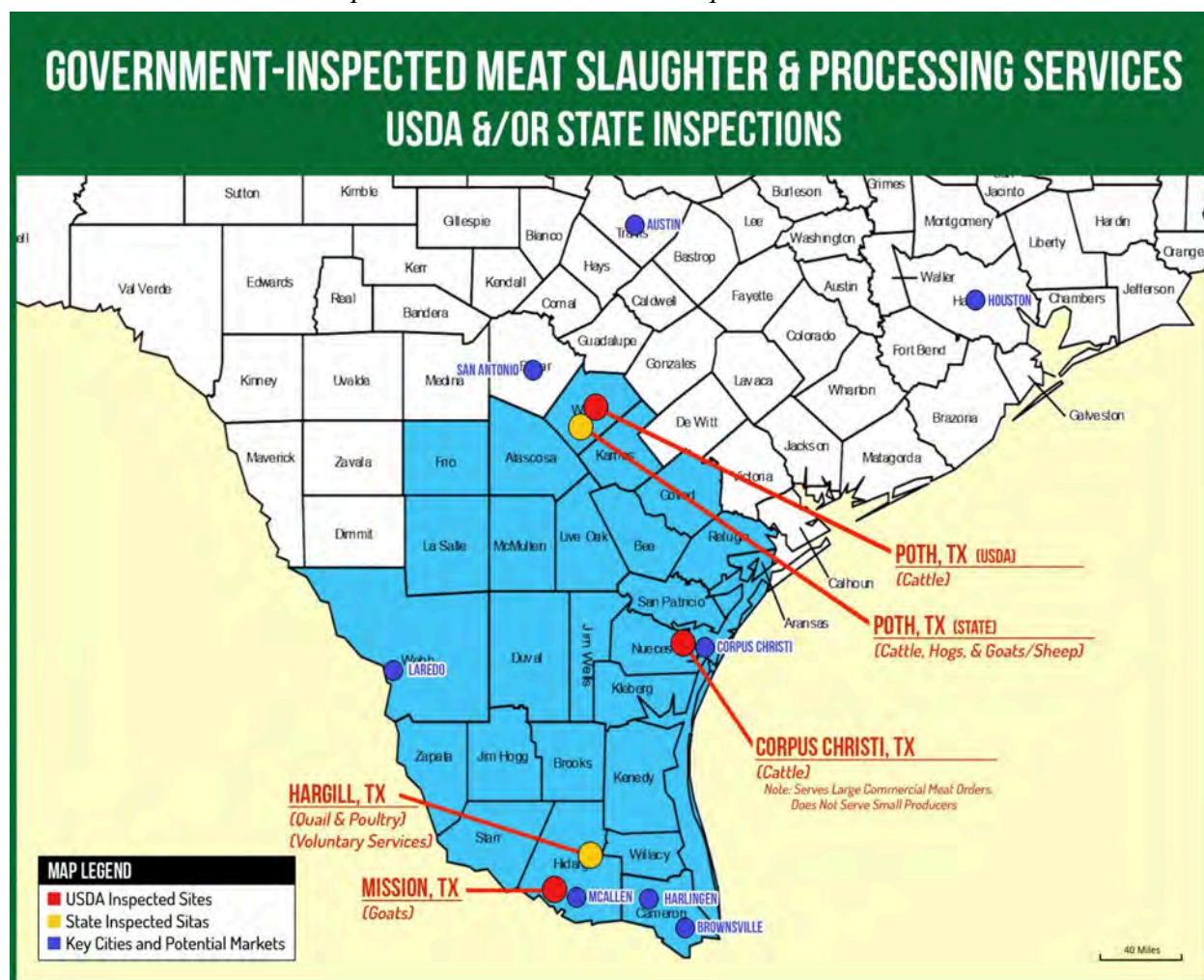


Table 1 summarizes the services that are available at the sites. Highlighted in red below are the two principal sites used by smaller producers that wish to sell meat products either in Texas or outside of Texas (if they use the USDA inspected site) or only in Texas (if they use the State-inspected site).

³ The map does not show USDA-approved sites that provide processing services only. Such sites currently are not approved to slaughter animals, which is a principal service that small producers are seeking to access more equitably in South Texas.

Table 1. Current Government-Inspected Services Used by Small Farmers

Inspections	Govt. Agency	Slaughter	Processing	Provides Services for Smaller Producers?	Farm Animals
Dean & Peeler Meatworks Poth, TX, Wilson County	USDA	✓	✓	Yes	Cattle
South Texas Beef Corpus Christi, TX, Nueces County	USDA	✓	✓	No	Cattle
Cabrito Market Mission, TX, Hidalgo County	USDA	✓	✓	Yes	Goats
Wiatrek's Processing Poth, TX, Wilson County	Texas DSHS*	✓	✓	Yes	Cattle Hogs Goats Sheep
International Magsa** Hargill, TX, Hidalgo County	Texas DSHS*	✓	✓	Yes	Quail

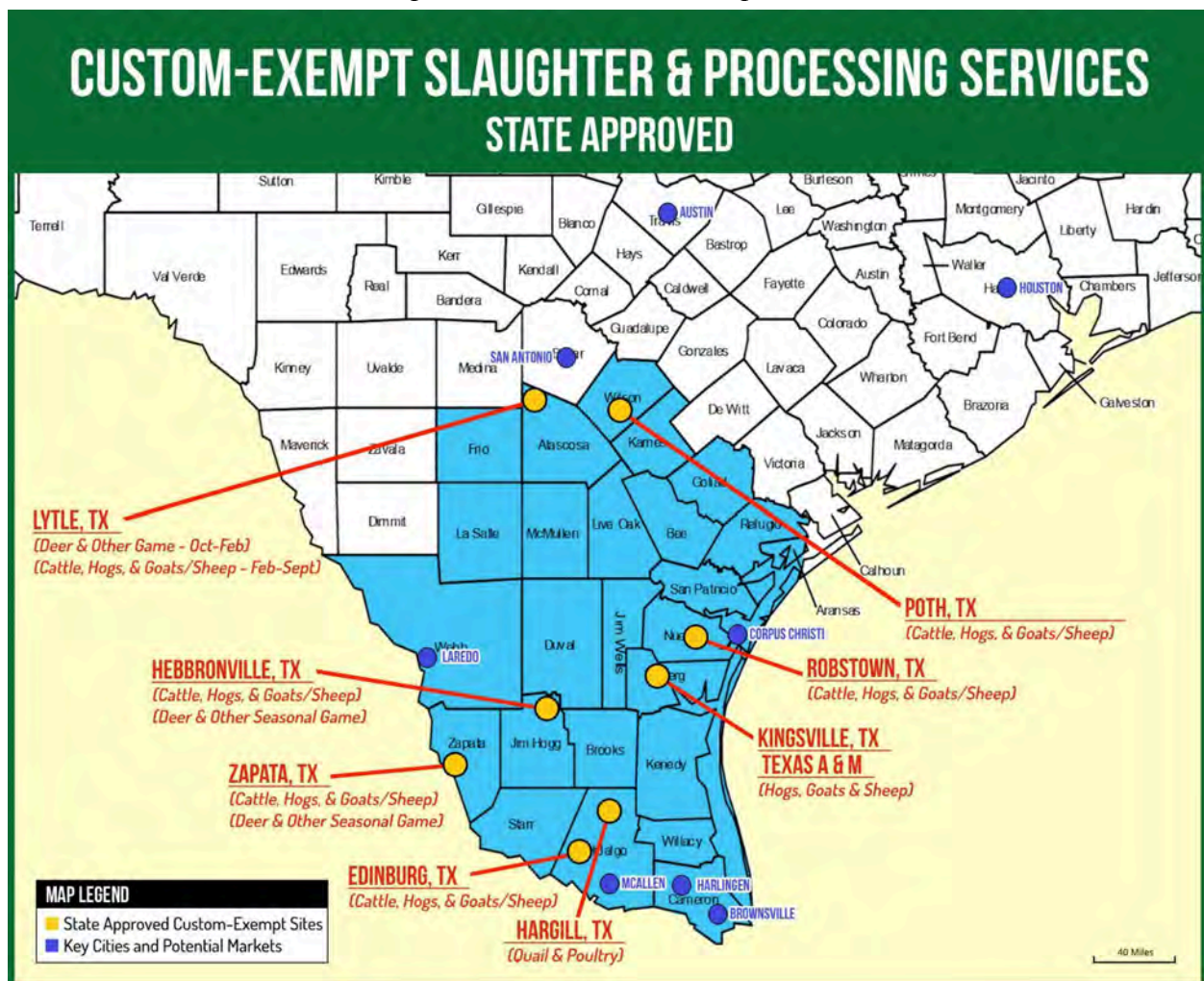
* Texas Department of State Health Services

** Operations at this facility were temporarily suspended by the owner in 2023. It is yet to be determined if he will reopen in 2024. The site has the capability to process other poultry.

Farmers can also access slaughter and processing services at custom-exempt slaughter and processing businesses if the meat products will not be sold and instead be consumed by the animal owner. Map 3 below shows the location of these custom-exempt state-approved sites.

As indicated on the map, it should be noted that access to even these custom exempt services can have seasonal limitations. Those sites located in counties where substantial deer hunting takes place suspends services during the annual October-February hunting period. As a result, small farms that raise animals for harvesting must plan accordingly for storage of meat products knowing that slaughter and processing services during these approximately 5 months will be limited or not available at all.

Map 3. Current Custom-Exempt Sites



Population of Smaller-Scale Producers: Beef Cattle

The number of beef cattle producers was reviewed in the 25 counties to measure the number of smaller-scale producers and their distribution in South Texas. The USDA defines a small farm as an operation with gross cash farm income under \$250,000. This definition was not used for this study. Some operations may be smaller but produce meat products that yield higher profit margins. Thus, the size categories by number of operations/farms was deemed more useful for this market analysis.

2017 Census data maintained by the USDA breaks down beef cattle operations by the number of heads held by the producer. For purposes of this study, farmers that hold from 10-19 heads are considered as small producers.⁴ However, the analysis of the data was extended to those producers that hold up to 49 cattle to account for the regional differences in what is considered as “small” among producers.

Here are highlights of this review of USDA data.

- **Highest Number of Small Farms Closer to San Antonio.** Regionally, the South Central Plains (comprised of 7 counties) closer to San Antonio had the highest number of small producers (1,240). In the higher category of 20-49 heads, the South Central Plains also had the highest number (1,387) of farms and ranches. As indicated above in Map 2 and Table 1, the only USDA inspections slaughter and processing site that serves small producers in South Texas is located in Poth in Wilson County in this Region.
- **Coastal Bend had the Second Highest Number of Small Farms.** The Coastal Bend Region (comprised of 10 counties) along and close to the Texas Gulf Coast had the second highest number of small farms (853). It also had the second highest number of farms with 20-49 heads (803).
- **Small Farms in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.** For operations with 10-19 heads the Rio Grande Valley (comprised of 4 counties) had 560 farms. It had 484 farms with 20-49 heads. Among the four counties, Starr County had the highest number of small farms under both categories (230 and 262, respectively).
- **Small Farms in Border Plains.** The four-county Border Plains Region had 501 small farms with 10-19 heads and 452 farms with 20-49 heads. Among the four counties, Duval County had the highest number of small farms under both categories (281 and 189, respectively).

⁴ Farmers with 1-9 heads are considered hobby farms. However, some still seek government-inspected services. This need was verified in the surveys collected for this study.

- **Counties with Highest Number of Small Farm Operations.** The counties with the highest number of small farms were the following:

Table 2. Counties with Highest Number of Small Farms with Beef Cattle

10-19 Heads	Region	20-49 Heads	Region
1. Wilson - 454 farms	South Central Region	1. Wilson - 461 farms	South Central Region
2. Duval - 281 farms	Border Plains	2. Karnes - 288 farms	South Central Region
3. Karnes - 247 farms	South Central Region	3. Atascosa - 271 farms	South Central Region
4. Starr - 230 farms	Lower Rio Grande Valley	4. Starr - 262 farms	Lower Rio Grande Valley
5. Goliad - 227 farms	Coastal Bend	5. Goliad - 249 farms	Coastal Bend

Population of Smaller-Scale Producers: Other Farm Animals

Table 3. Counties with Highest Number of Small Farms with Hogs

	Rio Grande Valley	Coastal Bend	Border Plains	South Central Plains
No. of Farms	251	236	38	144
Top 5 Counties	2.Hidalgo-107 3.Cameron-81 5.Starr-52	1.Nueces-134		4.Wilson-63

Table 4. Counties with Highest Number of Small Farms with Meat Goats

	Rio Grande Valley	Coastal Bend	Border Plains	South Central Plains
No. of Farms	577	485	176	549
Top 5 Counties	1.Hidalgo-316 5.Cameron-119 Starr-119	4.Jim Wells-144		2.Wilson-198 3.Atascosa-153

Table 5. Counties with Highest Number of Small Farms with Chickens⁵

	Rio Grande Valley	Coastal Bend	Border Plains	South Central Plains
No. of Farms	646	574	126	697
Top 5 Counties	2.Hidalgo-294 3.Cameron-216	5.Jim Wells-127		1.Wilson-308 4.Atascosa-148

Surveys of Producers

To assess the extent of need for additional government-inspection services for the slaughter and processing of farm animals, an anonymous bilingual survey was distributed and advertised in the 25 counties. The 10-question survey queried about the producer’s farming activities and their need for services. A sampling of 30 surveys was received from half of the counties. As expected more surveys were received from counties with larger populations. This was explained due in part to the larger distribution volumes for newspapers from larger population counties compared to rural counties that had small distributions.

⁵ Small farmers normally harvest their own chickens and do not seek or are required to use government-approved processing sites due to the small number that they normally manage.

Below are highlights of the survey responses that are pertinent to the purpose of the market study.

Survey Query: Distance Willing to Transport Animals to Access Government-Inspection Services

- 48% of respondents stated 50 miles or less.
- 21% of respondents stated 75 miles or less.

Survey Query: Why Farmers Need Access to Government-Inspection Services

- 22% of respondents stated to Sell at a Farmers Market or Other Public Venue.
- 18% of respondents stated to Sell at Own Farm.
- 22% of respondents stated For Own Consumption Only. This indicates a need for additional custom-exempt services for farmers that do not intend to sell their meat products.

Survey Query: Rio Grande Valley Farmers with Greatest Distance to Travel for Services

As explained above, the impetus for this study was to evaluate the burden that farmers from the Rio Grande Valley have to overcome to access government-inspection services for harvesting of farm animals. Small farms based in the Lower Rio Grande Valley must travel the longest distance (225 miles one way) to transport their animals to a USDA inspection facility in Wilson County southeast of San Antonio in Central Texas. Below are two key highlights:

- The respondents averaged 4 visits per year to access slaughter and processing services.
- The respondents averaged 12 animals transported per year.

Survey Query: Size of Farms

The results for this survey question showed higher numbers for both ends of the size scale. The large farms outside of the border region appear to have skewed the results. However, among Rio Grande Valley respondents, the respondents were more consistent with the US Census demographic data for small farm operations.

- 20% of all respondents had farms 5 acres or less.
- Among Rio Grande Valley respondents, 24% had farms of 5 acres or less.
- 23% of all respondents had farms larger than 200 acres.

Survey Query: Types of Farm Animals

- 41% of respondents stated that they raised cattle.
- 19% of respondents stated that they raised chickens.
- 15% of respondents stated that they raised hogs.
- Among Rio Grande Valley respondents, 32% stated cattle; 21% stated chickens, and 18% stated hogs.

Potential Sites for New Processing Sites

The study set out to identify what potential sites are available to develop into government-inspected businesses that can provide services closer to the farms and ranches in surrounding counties in that particular Region. This involved the author visiting sites where farm animal processing is already taking place but for personal consumption (i.e., custom-exempt sites). As explained above, these latter sites have met requirements for safety and operations to process animals for clients that will not sell the meat products but will consume themselves. These sites do not use government inspectors on site during the performance of slaughter and processing services. As explained further below, only one of the existing custom-exempt sites (in Robstown in the Coastal Bend Region) expressed an interest in upgrading its facility to apply for USDA-inspected status.

In evaluating potential sites, several factors were considered. For example, one was whether any current farms are planning to launch a new facility that offers government-inspected services for smaller farms. Another consideration was whether an existing custom-exempt site was able and willing to invest in its infrastructure to become a government-inspected services site.

Lower Rio Grande Valley

With 1.4 million people, the Region has the largest population of all of the South Texas Regions. Three of its four counties are located on the Texas-Mexico border. Its largest urban areas are the McAllen metropolitan area and the Harlingen-Brownsville corridor.

The Region does not have a USDA-inspections facility for livestock. The Region has one USDA-inspections facility in Mission, Texas (Hidalgo County). However, it only slaughters and processes goats. The Region has one state-approved site in Hargill, Texas (Hidalgo County) but can only process its quails and intends to develop the capability to process small animals such as other poultry, rabbits, and goats. The site is located in a remote rural area of the county and has available land for expansion if it chose to construct an expanded site to launch a facility for cattle and hogs. As indicated in Table 1 above, though, the owner has temporarily suspended operations.

Padilla Farms (Harlingen, Cameron, TX)

Padilla Farms of Harlingen, Texas (Cameron County) raises cattle, hogs, chickens, goats, and other farm animals. It is a 75-acre urban farm located in the southern area of the city that, despite being within the city limits, has a landscape that is rural in its composition. Surrounding properties, similar to the Padilla Farms, now compete with urbanization growth within a 5-mile radius comprised of single-family home subdivisions and apartment complexes. The farm owners submitted a grant application in November 2023 with the US. Department of Agriculture under its Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) for funds to pay for 30% of a proposed \$1.1 million slaughter and processing facility that it wishes to construct on the farm. If awarded the grant in 2024, the farm is committed to secure financing for the remaining 70% project cost.

Texas Green Growers CSA Cooperative

Padilla Farms secured commitments from ten farmers from five different counties to use the prospective new facility if constructed. The producers also committed to participate in the Texas Green Growers CSA Cooperative organized by the nonprofit organization, HOPE for Small Farm Sustainability, to feature more locally harvested products for direct-sales-to-consumers networks designed by HOPE for local and statewide supply networks. Five of the farmers are also involved with efforts described next to form a livestock cooperative.

RGV Livestock Cooperative

A group of farmers and ranchers that raise cattle in South Texas is forming a nonprofit cooperative through the assistance of the Texas Rural Cooperative Center of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). The group has taken steps to establish the organization as a nonprofit cooperative of farmers from counties in three of the study's regions (Rio Grande Valley, Coastal Bend, and Border Plains). It will continue to conduct meetings in 2024 to define start-up and operational costs. At the same time, it will develop strategies to determine the best marketing platforms to pursue. The group aims to construct a new facility at a location to be determined. It does not wish to convert an existing custom exempt facility into a government inspections site.

Regional Coverage of a New Facility

Since 50 miles was the preferred maximum miles to transport animals, a facility based in either Hidalgo or Cameron County would satisfy this mileage distance for any producer in any of the four counties of the Region.

Coastal Bend

Corpus Christi is the Region's largest urban area of this Region. None of the counties are located on the border. Half of the ten counties are located on the Gulf Coast.

The Region has no state-approved sites for the slaughtering and processing of farm animals. The Region has one USDA-inspections facility in Corpus Christi. However, South Texas Beef Co., a large plant, processes only large commercial orders for cattle; it does not serve small producers.

South Texas Beef Processes Large Corporate Orders such as for HEB Foods (Statewide Grocery Store Chain)



Scarborough's Custom Plant (Robstown, TX, Nueces County)

The Region has a state-approved custom exempt slaughtering and processing facility in Robstown that may be a candidate to convert into a USDA inspections facility. The site has been in operation for generations by the same family. Discussions with the owners reveal that they have mixed feelings about regaining inspections status that it had years ago. However, there is some interest to reestablish that level of service if appropriate resources are made available in the future to make facility improvements to add USDA inspections services.

Regional Coverage

The location of the custom exempt site is at a remote farming community named Banquete but with a Robstown address. The site is located between Alice in Jim Wells County and Robstown in Nueces County. It is centrally located in the Coastal Bend region. Its location would give producers in all 10 counties that comprise the Region with access to a government-inspections facility within 50 miles. It even offers proximity within 50 miles to two farming counties to the west in the Border Plains Region.

Border Plains

Two of the Region's four counties are located on the Texas-Mexico border. The largest urban area is Laredo on the border opposite Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. The Region has no USDA or state inspections facility for slaughter and processing services.

Cuatro Hermanos Meat Market (San Diego, TX, Duval County)

A new meat market business in the remote small city of San Diego, Texas expressed an interest in establishing a slaughter and processing facility based in Duval County. However, it has more interest in a custom-exempt facility to meet the needs of area ranchers. The owners see a greater interest in farmers having processing services for their own consumption. They do not see substantial market needs in that sparsely-populated region for government-inspected meats.

A facility in this community would enable services to be provided within 50 miles for much of the geographic area represented by the four counties that comprise this region. In addition, the region would enable services to be provided to approximately 6 of the 10 Coastal Bend Region counties. However, as stated the proprietors are not interested in offering government-inspected services at a new slaughter and processing facility. If they pursue the project, they intend to offer-custom exempt services for farmers in surrounding counties.

Potential of Laredo and Webb County for New Facility

Webb County, where the border city of Laredo is located, is another county to consider for a new facility. The City of Laredo (pop. 256,187) anchors the county, providing a market for government-inspected meat products. It also benefits from significant food and dining sales to Mexican nationals who reside across the border in Nuevo Laredo. Laredo has over 20 cold storage facilities that are certified by USDA to handle and forward exports and imports of meat and poultry. Three sites are USDA approved for processing of meats and poultry (but not slaughter). These businesses are relevant for a potential labor force to be trained to work at a future facility if it were based in Webb County. The employees because of their familiarity with meat products may be good candidates to recruit and train in specialized meat processing skills required to work at a new slaughter and processing facility.

South Central Plains

None of the seven counties have a large urban community. All are sparsely populated but collectively account for the largest number of small producers. All are situated within 50 miles of San Antonio (population 1.5 million) and its substantial market for meat products.

Only Region with Adequate Access to Services

The Region has both a USDA and state inspections facility. Both are located in Poth, Texas and both are the go-to facilities for South Texas small farmers. The USDA-approved site processes cattle, while the state-approved site processes cattle, hogs, and goats/sheep. Farmers in these seven counties that comprise this Region have the most immediate access within 75 miles to services in Poth due to their proximity. Additional inspection facilities are located in adjacent counties outside of this Region (and also within 75 miles).

Thus, smaller beef cattle operations have greater choices for slaughter and processing needs if they operate in any of the seven counties that comprise this Region. Not surprisingly, no interest was identified for the establishment of a new inspection facility in this Region. Accordingly, for the remainder of this study discussion this region is deemed served by services while the other three regions are deemed underserved.

Challenges and Limitations

The study outlines several challenges to be taken into account before any project is undertaken to establish a new government inspections harvesting site. Below are several highlights:

Capital Expenses to Launch a New Site

The start-up costs to construct and equip a small government-inspection facility is approximately \$1 million. The cost would be higher if land has to be acquired. This is a formidable amount for one small farmer. It is still a formidable amount for a group of smaller farmers and ranchers to collect to collaborate to share the risk when amounts of investment by all collaborators has to be set and secured. As noted below, MPPEP USDA construction and expansion grants have recently become available to provide more slaughter and processing services. However, in the latest and second round of this USDA funding opportunity the amount of the grant was limited to up to 30% of the project cost. Securing 70% of a \$1 million project cost will still require substantial capital and solid financing standing to secure such financing.

Consistent Supply of Animals to Harvest

For a small facility, annual operating expenses to operate a small facility are approximately \$450,000 assuming 4 personnel are hired. This assumes a minimum of 10-15 cattle per week supplied by farmers in addition to a mix of other types of farm animals to meet monthly income goals.

A small farm that normally owns 10-19 heads of cattle will be unable to supply enough animals. Thus, commitments or business relationships with an adequate number of producers within a 50-mile radius will be required to sustain operations to achieve the minimum weekly number and mix of farm animals.

As mentioned above, Padilla Farms organized such a group of producers to express their intention to use the proposed new slaughter and processing facility if constructed. Thus, they have demonstrated already that sufficient animal commitments can be secured from current small producers for a new facility in the Rio Grande Valley region.

Labor Supply and Equipment

Personnel from similar businesses, such as butchers from meat markets in the vicinity, need to be trained and recruited to work at a new facility. The alternative is to invest in college-age students to be trained at a college or university program such as Texas A&M-Kingsville in the Coastal Bend Region.⁶ Under the second option, a new facility owner would have to invest in personnel to be trained prior to the launch of a new facility to ensure that they are ready to provide services as soon as a new facility opens.

Specialized equipment and tools for a slaughter and processing facility need to be ordered with adequate lead to ensure delivery prior to or soon after completion of construction of the physical structure. Equipment manufacturers continue post-COVID to catch up to meet supply product orders, particularly for specialized equipment such as that required for a farm animal harvesting facility.

Learning Curve for Farmers and Ranchers to Sell Meat Products

The Census producer statistics demonstrate that there are adequate numbers of beef cattle producers that could supply animals to a new facility. However, many are used to selling their animals at auction houses or to large suppliers of beef cattle. The impetus for such sales is to meet the costs of raising the animals. Thus, to recruit such farmers as customers for a new government-inspections facility, they must adopt a new business model orientation in their farm animals planning. Specifically, this means attempting to sell meat products online or on a retail or wholesale basis that require the application of new sales and marketing skills. In general, producing meat for this method of business requires the adoption of a different set of business and farming considerations.

That new mode of business planning for farm animals also requires new business relationships with customers, new marketing investments, new packaging and perhaps storefront investments by the small producer (unless the products are offered for sale at the retail storefront of a new processing facility). These factors require new cost-profit calculations to ensure that a target profit margin is achieved by the small farmer or rancher.

⁶ <https://www.tamuk.edu/agriculture/research/usdahsigrants/MEATS.html>

Nonprofit organizations that have been funded by USDA under several technical assistance and farmer counseling programs are available to assist producers. These funded organizations offer year-round support, webinar, in-person training, and other activities to develop these types of business skills.⁷

Opportunities

However, the study outlines several opportunities that would support the development of a project to establish a new government-inspections harvesting site. Several of these opportunities are highlighted below:

Establish a Safety Net of Local Products for Food Supply

COVID unveiled the vulnerability of our food supply chains when a national crisis disrupts the standard networks of distribution of all food products. Large grocery stores had no answers for customers once supplies were exhausted during COVID in 2020-2021. Shoppers were particularly alarmed when meat products and dairy products were not available for days. Across South Texas locally based farms that could supply these products quickly and continuously exhausted any products they were able to sell.

In the status quo, households remain at the mercy of large grocery stores to ensure they truck into the region adequate supplies to feed families. In any future crisis that disrupts the supply of meat products for homes, the operation of a new government-inspections facility plus the projected number of farm animals supplied by local farmers will ensure that proteins continue to be available during any supply chain crisis. Because products would be sold to consumers, access to government inspection harvesting services is essential.

Increased Texas Urban Demand for Locally Raised Products

Farmers markets in the largest urban metropolitan areas of Texas – Houston, San Antonio, Austin, and especially Dallas – seek Texas-grown produce, meat products, dairy products, and value-added products. This includes South Texas products that can sell at a premium at those venues.

The operation of an additional government-inspections facility would increase the availability of South Texas meat products that can be sold to consumers or restaurants at these urban markets. In addition, the South Texas region that is the subject of this study has three main urban areas that are closer to area farmers. The Lower Rio Grande Valley has a combined population of 1.4 million, Corpus Christi has 316,239, and Laredo has 256,187. All of these areas offer smaller farmer markets and other buyers of locally raised meats as well.

⁷ Nonprofit entities such as HOPE for Small Farm Sustainability (Harlingen, TX) and the Texas Rural Cooperative Center of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (Edinburg, TX) offer no-cost technical assistance services throughout the Rio Grande Valley Region..

Opportunity for Small and Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers to Collaborate

The lack of access for services in South Texas provides the opportunity for a collaborative of smaller farmers and ranchers to collectively establish a new facility. This approach provides the opportunity to share the risk of investment to ensure adequate commitments of animals every month to be harvested and processed.

The new Rio Grande Valley Livestock Cooperative that is forming to ultimately establish a meat slaughter and processing facility holds promise. It will represent a test case on whether smaller producers in this Region and from other South Texas counties can effectively garner the necessary investments and efforts to start a new facility. It will also instruct other farmers what mix of animals will best enable the facility to succeed. The Padilla Farms' proposal for a new facility to be established in Harlingen also holds promise; it is the only project in the region that has proceeded to the next step to apply for federal grant and bank funding to construct a new facility. The Livestock Cooperative and Padilla Farms could coordinate their plans as well depending on whether USDA awards Padilla Farms a MPPEP grant in 2024.

It is commendable that USDA has been investing millions to assist socially and economically disadvantaged farmers, such as Hispanics. 20 of the 25 counties in the study's geographic scope are majority Hispanic; 12 of the 25 counties have populations of over 75% Hispanic or Latino origin while 7 of the 25 counties have Hispanic populations of 90% or more. Thus, this opportunity to support a collaboration centered around government-inspected services has the potential to improve the economic wellbeing of Hispanics in agriculture in South Texas.

Opportunity in Innovation through Multi-Regional Collaboration: HUB Aggregator

Under the status quo, the government inspections sites in Poth, Texas in Wilson County in the northeastern end of the study's four-region South Central Plains area serves as the de facto sole processor for government-inspected services for all of South Texas' small farms. However, as shown on Map 2 it is not centrally located. It is located closer to San Antonio than to the rest of South Texas. The seven counties that comprise the South Central Plains are adequately served for government inspection services in Poth. However, the 18 counties of the other three Regions are underserved.

Thus, an alternative strategy would be to aggregate farm animals from the other three Regions at a South Texas geographically centrally located site. A facility would be established in a county that would maximize coverage of counties within a 50-mile radius (the preferred travel distance by survey respondents) or a 75-mile radius (the second preferred travel distance by survey respondents).

Two counties in the Coastal Bend Region provide strategic locations to maximize proximity to the greatest number of counties.

Alice, TX in Jim Wells County

As shown on Map 4 below, under a 50-mile radius, 10 of the 18 underserved counties would be served. Under a 75-mile radius, 16 of the 18 underserved counties would be served. The City of Alice is the county seat and is located at the intersection of two principal highways (State Highway 44 and State Highway 281/future interstate) that are used by personal and commercial traffic traveling in any direction in Texas. Alice is also the site of Gulf Coast Livestock Auction that serves all surrounding ranching counties. It conducts weekly auctions for multiple types of farm animals and serves as a nexus for farm animal owners putting their animals up for sale.

Map 4. Alice, TX Location as HUB Aggregator



Falfurrias in Brooks County

Under a 50-mile radius, 11 of the underserved counties would be served. Under a 75-mile radius, 14 of the underserved counties would be served. The City of Falfurrias is the county seat and is located at the intersection of two principal highways (State Highway 285 and State Highway 281/Interstate 69C). Falfurrias's location closer to the Rio Grande Valley ensures that all four counties that comprise this high population border area is served by a regional South Texas government inspection facility. Brooks County is a rural farming county that is surrounded by similar counties that are sparsely populated and focus on cattle ranching as the principal agricultural activity.

Map 5. Falfurrias TX Location as HUB Aggregator



Highlights of this hub concept include:

- Facility would be developed by a cooperative of producers from the three underserved regions; Rio Grande Valley, Coastal Bend, and Border Plains.
- Facility would employ a lead Aggregator per Region to recruit and secure farm animal commitments for the slaughter and processing facility.
- Facility would employ or contract with marketing personnel to encourage farm animal owners to commit animals for retail and wholesale customers identified by the Hub.
- The producers in each region would contribute toward the cost of marketing and sales services for the products of that producer.
- As collaboration increases so would the opportunities to share market information, labor market information, and farm animal production best practices, among other areas.
- In return for placing the site in Alice or Falfurrias, the cooperative would solicit an incentive investment from the corresponding county and/or municipal government program that financially supports new business development.

The aggregation of animals in a HUB facility also reduces the risk of seasonal lows in the number of animals to be processed. The fact that animals would be supplied by three different regions increases the ability of the processor to keep its employees hired and to continue to cover operations costs.

Federal Investments in New Harvesting Sites

The consolidation of meat processing by large plants has continued in the United States.⁸ At the same time, smaller farmers with a smaller number of animals to harvest continue to need access to government-inspected services if they wish to contribute their meat products to the food supply. The USDA has recognized this market reality and has invested in meat and poultry processing sites to expand capacity and access to producers of all sizes through the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion (MPPEP Program) and through the Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program. In Phase I, the Department awarded nearly \$150 million in grants and loans to processing site projects. In Phase II, it made available \$123 million.

The required applicant match for Phase I was 80% of project costs (thus grants were available for 20% of the project cost). For Phase II, the applicant match requirement was 70% of project costs (thus grants were available for 30% of project costs).

Such a match/grant allocation can act as a disincentive for socially and economically disadvantaged farmers and small farms in general to collaborate to plan and launch a new site project. If the grant award potential is increased for future funding opportunities, USDA can expect more new slaughter and processing facility proposals to be submitted for consideration.

Conclusion

The federal government's investments in farm animal slaughter and processing projects is laudable. It has acknowledged that the access and playing field for small producers of domestic meat products is not level with large suppliers that have ready access to large meatpacking plants and corporate-funded food supply networks.

South Texas small farmers wish to do their part to feed Texas and feed other communities in the U.S. They take pride in raising their animals knowing that they will play such a critical role in our food system. They take pride in producing excellent domestically raised meat products. They take pride in continuing the practice of agriculture in an era when farming families are continuously tempted to give up their lands to urbanization.

Hispanic farmers comprise the majority of small farm owners in the South Texas area of study of 25 counties. As a result, they are disproportionately burdened by the lack of local access to government-inspected services. Thus, there is urgency to support farmers that collaborate to plan and invest together to address this disparity and increase the supply of locally harvested proteins for Texas and American consumers. This USDA-funded study is offered to provide market insights and regional considerations for new and sustainable processing services.

⁸ See the Biden Administration's statement and response to address the industry concentration of services: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/blog/2021/09/08/addressing-concentration-in-the-meat-processing-industry-to-lower-food-prices-for-american-families/>

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Processing Services Defined

The study's aim was to evaluate the potential for South Texas to support additional government-inspection services through a new facility or facilities. The services include both slaughtering of farm animals and processing of the animal to cut, prepare, and package meat products for sale by the owner of the meat. The term "harvesting" is occasionally used to capture the occurrence of both slaughter and processing services. The term "processing" will similarly refer to both services. Where "processing" is intended to only refer to the preparation and packaging of meat products, the study will indicate as such. Otherwise, for purposes of this study the term will refer to both services being performed by a processor for a farmer who intends to sell the meat products.

USDA v. State Inspection Services

Most producers understood the principal difference between the types of inspection services. Thus, they seek these services because they intend to achieve higher profits from the resale of the meat products. There was not a substantial preference for USDA-inspected because they planned to sell only intrastate (within the State of Texas). However, they understood that if in the future they also wished to sell to clients outside of Texas they would have to use the USDA-inspected establishment.

Custom Exempt Processing Services

Custom-exempt custom slaughterhouses are an alternative to inspector-serviced sites. These sites do not require the presence of inspectors to oversee the animal harvesting. These sites meet the same meat safety standards as inspected sites. However, these sites have the limitation that the animal owner cannot sell the meat derived from the custom-exempt processing. The meats can only be consumed by the owner of the animal. Similarly, if the owner sells shares or portions of the animal (usually cattle) prior to harvesting the purchasers of the shares must consume the meat products, not resell.

Business Feasibility of Potential Sites not Proposed

The study did not propose to set forth the economic viability of any one particular site. That scope would require a detailed comparison of all costs to develop, operate, and maintain the location. At the same time, all potential revenue sources would have to be calculated to determine whether a site would be able to meet costs or make a profit. That type of study would also have to project the appropriate mix of farm animals (and possibly deer and other game) that would be recommended to achieve financial goals to sustain operations of an establishment.

Instead, this market study is intended to serve as a reference point for any farmer, business owner, or cooperative that seeks to develop a site as a government-inspected site in South Texas. The survey responses and other data provided (e.g., producer populations and location in South Texas), can affirm potential project plans to develop a site to where small farmers and ranchers from more than one Region can support operations in the long run. The goal is to support funding proposals submitted to private or public sources.

Mobile Harvesting Services not an Option

Mobile slaughter and processing service providers were not included as a potential solution for the problem of lack of access to fixed establishments that offer government-inspected services. The mobile services reviewed provide only custom-exempt services and were not seen as a viable alternative. Producers interviewed for the study were more interested in striving for additional and permanent establishments closer to their farms and ranches. They expressed concerns with having to address environmental responsibility for the disposal of animal parts or remains that would result from a mobile slaughter service on their farm property.

Definition of “Local”

The study will use “local” to indicate that the meat originated and was processed in the geographic area of this market study. USDA’s definition that the product was produced, marketed, and consumed within 400 miles is one guide. However, it is not a reliable universal measure of what “local” should mean. Other variables (e.g., transportation network of the product, method of distribution, and size of state) can affect whether this USDA mileage-based definition is reasonable to use. Thus, for this study meat products will be deemed “local” if they originated and were produced in this area of South Texas.

BACKGROUND

Relevance of Small Producer Meat Products

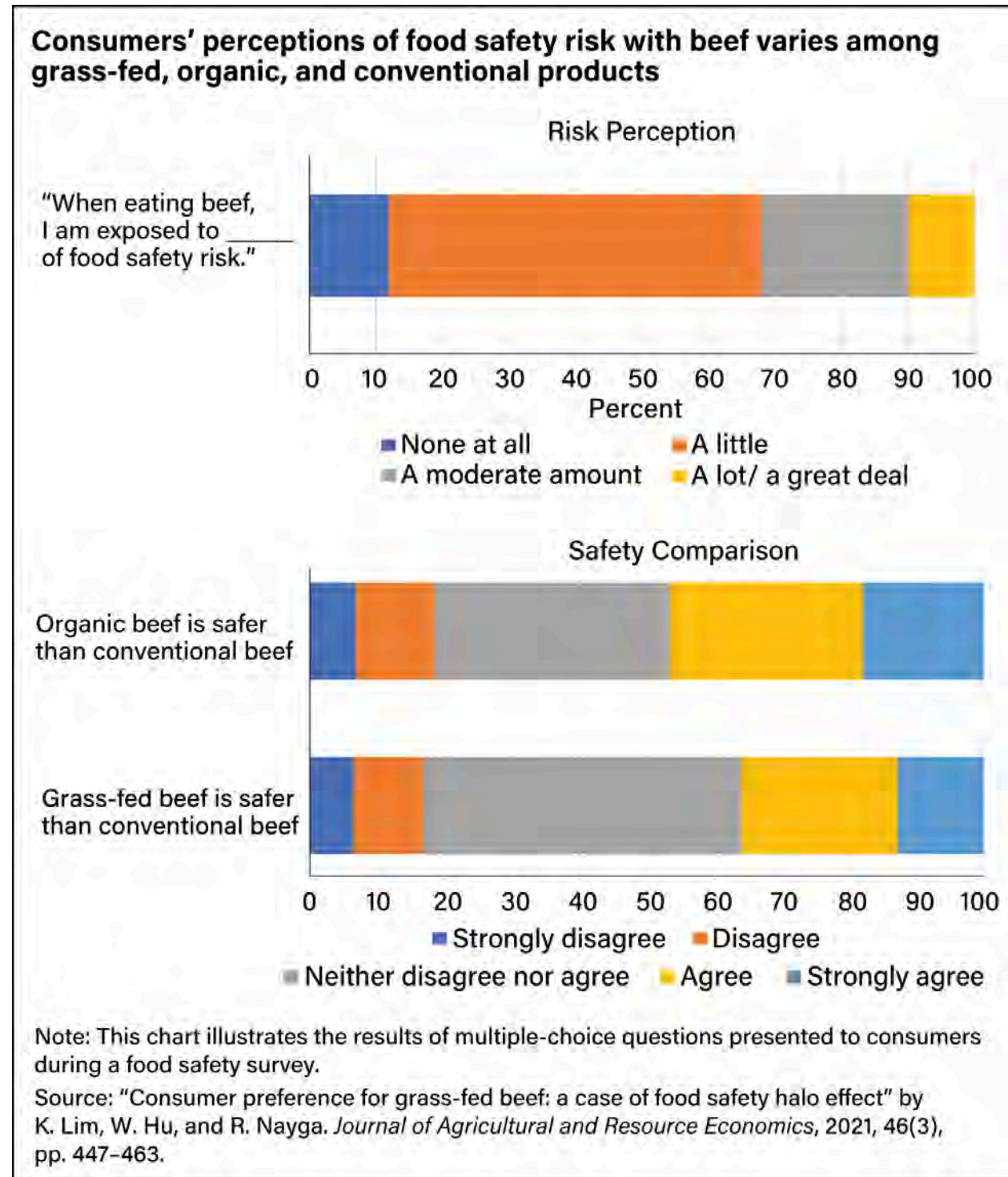
Nationally, the USDA estimates that small family farms were responsible for 27.1% of beef production, 16.9% of hogs production, and 49.3% of poultry and eggs.⁹

Meat products generated by small producers are relevant particularly to fill the need for consumers that wish to know where their meat comes from.¹⁰ Small-scale producers and family-owned farms may represent a smaller share of meat suppliers, but they are the only source of truly locally raised meats. Consumer views on the safety of meats produced by organic or grass-fed methods versus conventional beef production are also relevant to explain the need to support small farm production. Below are the results of a consumers survey made available by the USDA on its website. The results show that consumers hold firm views that organic and grass-fed beef is safer than conventional beef produced through large meatpacking plants.

⁹ Whitt, Christine, Jessica E. Todd, and Andrew Keller, America's Diverse Family Farms 2021 Edition (Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Information Bulletin Number 231, December 2021), p. 6.

¹⁰ Thomas, Heather Smith, Getting Started with Beef & Dairy Cattle (Storey Publishing, North Adams, MA, 2005), pp. 97-99.

Exhibit 1. Consumers' Views on Beef Safety



Source:

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/gallery/chart-detail/?chartId=103404>

Inherent Cost Disadvantages

Federal regulations that govern slaughter and processing activities appear to be skewed against the small producer. The meat market supplied by small producers carries inherent higher costs. A small farmer normally has only a few grass-fed high quality animals to process and is forced to incur higher costs of production. One estimate is that 20 percent of the cost of raising beef for this specialized market is in the processing and handling of farm animals to even get them to a government-inspected facility. This includes such specific activities as transporting the animals to the processing plant, getting the meat cut and packed to the small producer's specifications, and then storing and distributing the packaged meats to their direct customers, such as at farmers markets and to local stores.¹¹

Plans to Raise More Farm Animals

Producers interviewed for the study verified these additional burdens they experience – in time and expenses – simply to access processing sites authorized to provide government-inspection services. Despite these cost disadvantages, they intend to continue raising animals to supply meat products for consumers. In fact, survey respondents responded in the affirmative when asked whether they would raise more animals if a slaughter and processing site was located closer to their farm or ranch. (See Table 8 below.)

State and Government Attention

State of Texas

The recent 2023 Texas Legislature addressed the need for farmers to offer for sale smaller portions or shares of animals (normally beef cattle). This would allow farmers to increase the number of buyers of shares before an animal is harvested. This pertained to the harvesting of livestock by custom exempt processing sites. Even though this matter did not involve government-inspected services, the legislative action and deliberation on the legislative proposal alerted state legislators to the lack of options faced by smaller farms and ranchers. Senate Bill 691 went into effect on September 1, 2023 to allow smaller shares of harvested livestock to be sold to animal co-owners for their own consumption, but not for resale.¹²

U.S. Congress

On June 13, 2023 the U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Administrative State, Regulatory Reform, and Antitrust held an outstanding hearing titled “Where’s the Beef? Regulatory Barriers to Entry and Competition in Meat Processing” to explore how government regulations can create barriers to entry and expansion in the meat industry. The hearing particularly focused on issues and laws that keep small- and medium-sized businesses from

¹¹ Thomas, p. 102.

¹² <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=88R&Bill=SB691>

effectively competing.¹³ The need to support expansion of small processing sites for both custom exempt purposes and government-inspected services was included in the hearing discussion.

Companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate known as the PRIME Act would allow for the resale of meat products harvested by custom-exempt processing facilities.¹⁴ The goal would be to give small producers more processing options when they intend to sell their meat products to consumers. Supporters of the legislation are advocating vigorously for its inclusion in the Farm Bill to be considered in 2024 or possibly 2025.

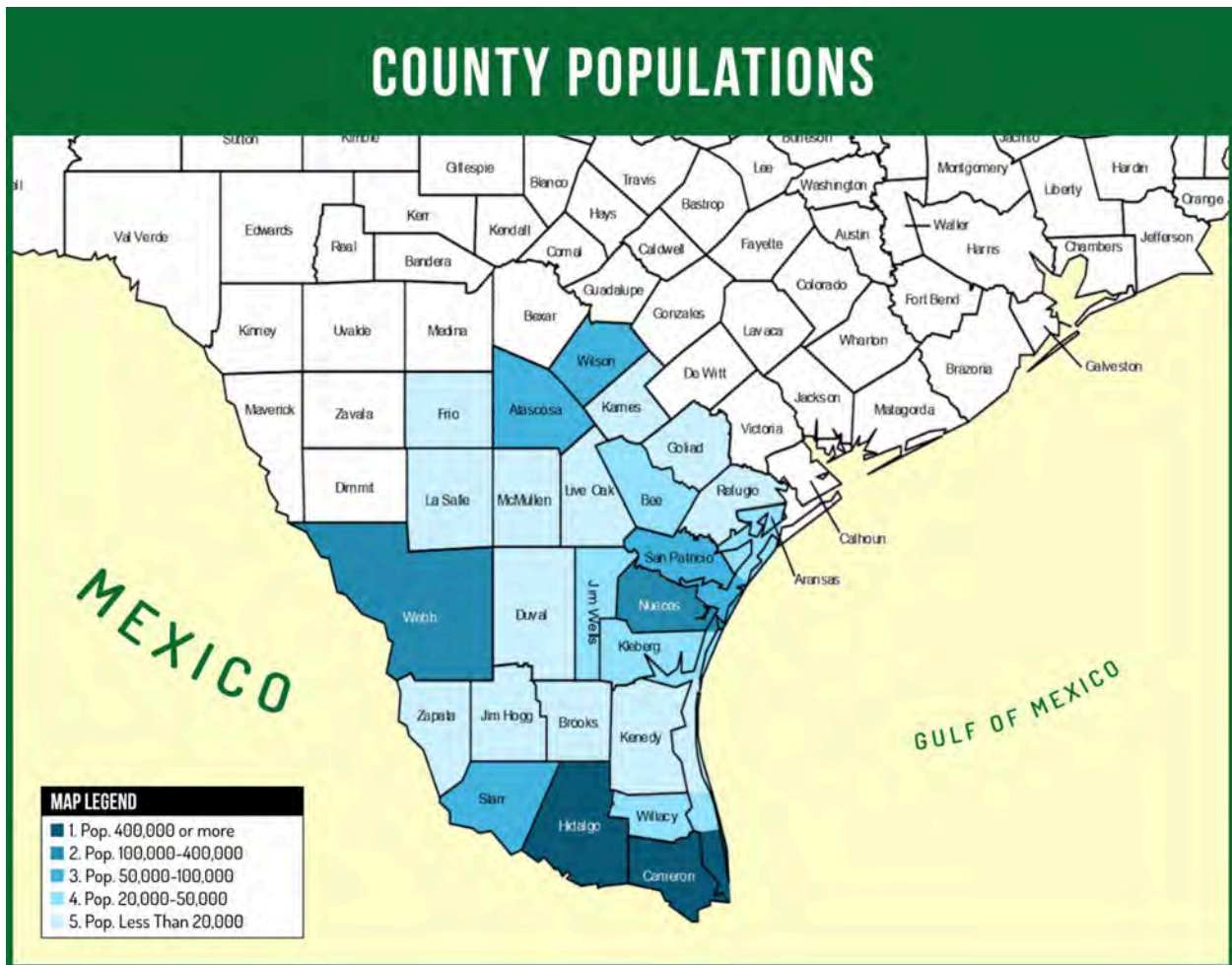
¹³ The full hearing with full discussion and testimony can be accessed at:
<https://judiciary.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/wheres-beef-regulatory-barriers-entry-and-competition-meat-processing>

¹⁴ Both House and Senate bills can be accessed at the following:
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/2814/related-bills>

GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF STUDY

As shown below, the 25 counties that comprise the South Texas area of study show that the largest population counties of Hidalgo and Cameron Counties are located in the Rio Grande Valley; together they account for over 1.3 million of the region's 1.4 million population. Not as large but also populous are Corpus Christi (Nueces County pop. 351,674) on the Texas Coast. Laredo anchors Webb County (267,780) on the west on the border; its local economy is substantially supported by the sister Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo (population 373,725).

Map 6. County Populations



Source: U.S. Census Quickfacts, Population Estimates, July 1, 2023.

Regardless of where a smaller farmer or rancher is located in the Area of Study, their only option for government-inspected services within this Area of Study is Poth, Texas in Wilson County. Those counties closer to San Antonio and to Poth also have processing options outside of this Area of Study, such as in Uvalde and Gonzalez.

The two options in Poth are Dean & Peeler Meatworks that provides USDA inspection services for cattle and Wiatrek's Processing that provide state-approved inspection services for cattle, hogs, and goats/sheep.

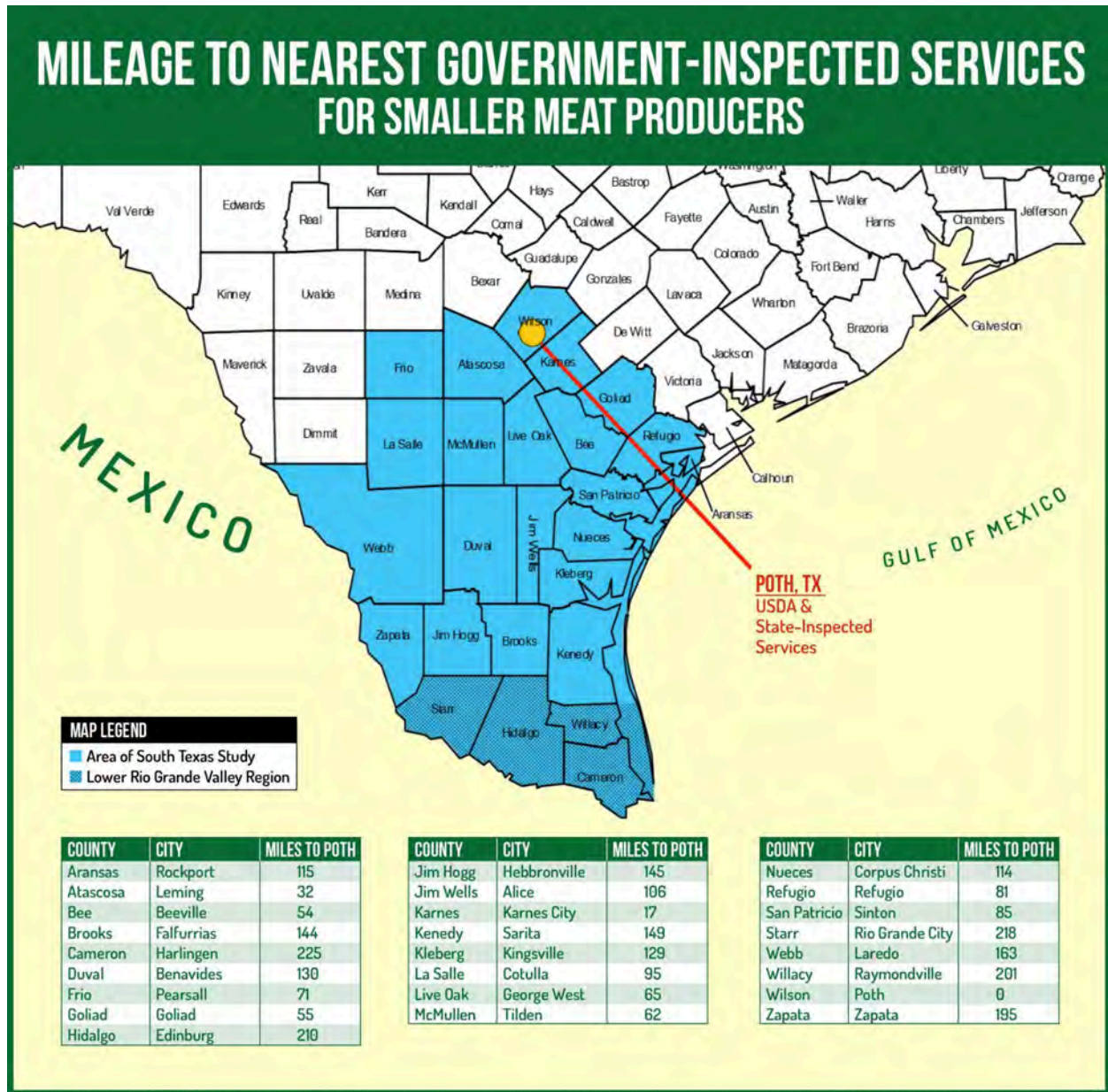
The Wiatrek's and Deen & Peeler Processing Facilities are located outside of Poth, Texas. They are located across the roadway from each other on a rural roadway. Wiatrek's also operates a Meat Market in Poth.



Map 7 below shows the mileage from any of the other 24 counties to Poth, Texas, Wilson County, the nearest location for USDA- and state-inspection slaughter and processing services. Only 2 counties are within a 50-mile radius of Poth; only 7 are within a 75-mile radius of Poth. Farmers in 14 of the counties must travel over 100 miles for services.

Due to this mileage burden, producers incur travel expenses, especially fuel to transport trailers with their farm animals. Visits to Poth must also be scheduled from 1-2 months ahead of time. A second visit is required to Poth to pick up their products and they must keep them frozen until relocating to freezers at their farms or ranches.

Map 7. Mileage to Nearest Government-Inspected Services



OUTREACH TO PRODUCERS

August 2023 Southern Family Farmers & Food Conference



The author reached out to producers through various channels and methods including the following:

- Paid advertisements and press releases explaining the study to 26 newspapers and news outlets.
- Distribution to all 25 Texas A&M Extension Service County Agent offices that serve as liaisons with farmers and producers in their respective counties.
- Distribution at public events, including the annual Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas Convention & Trade Show (San Marcos, Texas) and the Southern Family Farmers & Food Conference (San Marcos, Texas).

- Distribution to regional colleges supporting agricultural cooperatives and careers in agriculture and processing specifically.
- Individual producer members of new and pending cooperatives being formed.
- Distribution on the Padilla Farms LLC website at <https://yahwehfarm.com/farm-animal-processing/>
- Distribution at local farm supplies stores.
- Distribution by the Farm and Freedom Alliance to its members located in the Area of Study.

Attachments to this study include the survey (English and Spanish versions), a sample press release, sample news stories, and the information promotional card that was distributed at events such as the following:



KEY FINDINGS OF FARMER SURVEYS

The author sought to collect a representative sample of the views and experiences of farmers throughout the four South Texas regions. As explained above, the bilingual survey was distributed using the same methods of distribution throughout the three regions. This approach was used to ensure that producers would have the same opportunity to submit their views. The survey was designed to be representative of the population of producers and other relevant individuals with an interest in seeking access to slaughter and processing services.

In this way, the observations and generalizations could be inferred and reached with greater confidence.¹⁵ The random method of receiving surveys resulted in a sampling with feedback that approximated the views of the entire universe of producers. The surveys provided results from anonymous farmers and ranchers that are currently affected by the lack of government-inspected slaughter and processing services for the farm animals that they raise meat production. The survey results also included affirmative responses that they would be incentivized to raise more animals for the food supply if services were located closer to their farm or ranch.

Distance Willing to Travel to Access Services

Survey participants were asked how many miles they currently travel to access services at a processing facility (Question 6). They also answered Question 8 of how many miles was reasonable to travel (one way) to a slaughter/processing site. Below are the results for all respondents. Results are also shown for Rio Grande Valley (RGV) farmers who have the longest distance to travel to Poth, Texas (225 miles one way).

Table 6. Reasonable Distance to Travel to Access Services

Distance	All Respondents	RGV Respondents
25 miles or less	14%	13%
50 miles or less	48%	47%
75 miles or less	21%	20%
100 miles or less	10%	7%
more than 100 miles	7%*	13%*

**These respondents may have intended to answer how many miles they travel now to access services.*

¹⁵ Spurr, William A., Lester S. Kellogg, and John H. Smith, Business and Economic Statistics (Richard D. Irwin, Inc, Homewood, Illinois, 1955), pp. 86-88.

Purpose of Needing Access to Government-Inspected Processing Services

The following results break down the reasons that respondents need access to slaughter and processing services. Question 4 itemized the following reasons and asked the respondents to check off all that applied.

Table 7. Reasons to Access Services

Purpose	All Respondents	RGV Respondents
Sell at a Farmers Market or Other Public Venue	22%	20%
Sell at Own Farm	18%	16%
Sell to Local Grocers	4%	7%
Sell to Local Restaurants	4%	7%
Sell through Online Orders	10%	7%
Supply Own Food Service Business	2%	3%
For Own Consumption and Another Purpose Above	16%	16%
For Own Consumption Only	22%	23%

Of note is that those wishing to access services for their own consumption would only require custom-exempt services (not government inspected). Although more of these custom-exempt businesses exist, these responses indicate that more of these types of processing services are needed throughout South Texas.

In fact, Gulf Coast Livestock Auction¹⁶ explained that they receive 8-10 calls every month from producers or buyers of livestock asking for referrals where they can take a calf or other cattle for slaughter and processing for their own consumption.

¹⁶ Gulf Coast Livestock Auction, located in Alice, Texas in Jim Wells County in the Coastal Bend Region, provides livestock sales for producers from three of the South Texas Regions on a weekly basis.

Annual Number of Visits to Access Services

The table below lists the number of times per year that producers from the Rio Grande Valley Region state that they transport their animals for processing services. The range is broad from 1 visit to 12 times a year. The number of farm animals transported also varies broadly from 1 to 40.

Table 8. Annual Visits to Access Services

Distance Deemed Reasonable to Transport Animals for Harvesting	# of Visits Per Year to Processing Sites	# of Animals Transported Annually for Harvesting Services	Would you Raise More Animals if Local Services were Available?
25 miles or less	2	2 animals	yes
	4	40 animals	yes
50 miles or less	3	6 animals	yes
	6	18 animals	yes
	1	1 animal	yes
	1	1 animal	yes
	2	4 animals	yes
	12	20 animals	yes
	4	25 animals	yes
75 miles or less	8	8 animals	yes
	2	2 animals	yes
	2	4 animals	yes
100 miles or less	1	0 animals	no
more than 100 miles	1	3 animals	yes
	12	36 animals	yes

Land Size of Farms

Among Rio Grande Valley survey respondents, the largest number of respondents were the smaller farms with 5 acres or less. Among all respondents, 20% of respondents had 5 acres or less. Even larger farms (with 200 acres or more) that responded to the survey contributed their views to farmer data collection.

Table 9. Land Size of Farms

Acreage	All Respondents	RGV Respondents
5 acres or less	20%	24%
10 acres or less	10%	17%
25 acres or less	7%	12%
50 acres or less	10%	17%
100 acres or less	17%	17%
200 acres or less	13%	0%
Greater than 200 acres	23%	12%

Animals Raised by Small Farms and Ranches

The response results were not a surprise. Even among smaller farms that wish to contribute to the Texas and national food supply, cattle is king. The results show a good variety of others that are contributed to our food system by South Texas producers: lambs, sheep, pigs, turkeys, chickens, and even quail.¹⁷

¹⁷ One respondent stated that they planned to diversify by planning a catfish farm.

Table 10. Types of Animals Raised for Meat Products

Type	All Responses	%	All RGV Responses	%
Cattle	24	41%	11	32%
Chickens	11	19%	7	21%
Turkeys	3	5%	2	6%
Quail	1	2%	1	2%
Hogs	9	15%	6	18%
Lambs	2	3%	2	6%
Sheep	5	8%	3	9%
Goats	3	5%	2	6%
Rabbits	1	2%	0	0%
TOTAL RESPONSES	59	100%	34	100 %

POTENTIAL SITES FOR NEW SERVICES

Because the focus of the market study is government-inspected services, the author focused on reviewing potential locations for new services. Below is a summary of potential sites and their stage of development. Also included is one potential site for a new custom-exempt facility that would process animals for consumption by the animal owners only.

Potential Site: Padilla Farms LLC dba Yahweh's All Natural Farm and Garden

The 75-acre farm owned by Saul and Diana Padilla is located in Harlingen, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas (225 miles from the nearest government-inspected slaughter and processing facility). The family-owned farm raises cattle, goats, hogs, and poultry for meat production.

The farm applied in November 2023 for a Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) for a federal grant to pay for 30% of the cost of the construction of a new USDA processing facility at its farm. If awarded the grant, the farm is committed to secure financing for the remaining 70% of the project cost. Padilla Farms secured the commitments of 11 farmers to use the site for processing services.

Below is the current entrance to the site that it proposed in its MPPEP grant application.

Entrance to the Selected Site for a Padilla Farms Processing Site



Potential Site: Scarborough’s Custom Plant (Robstown/Banquete, TX, Coastal Bend Region)

This family-owned custom-exempt facility has operated in rural Nueces County at the same location for decades. The next generation of the Scarborough family is now working diligently with Mr. Jack Scarborough to continue operations. The well-maintained and well-equipped site meets custom-exempt processing needs of area ranchers and farmers of the Coastal Bend Region and from other areas of Texas.

The facility occasionally gets requests to process animals through the use of USDA government inspectors in order to resell the meat. The Scarboroughs are aware what improvements would be necessary to their facility to meet USDA standards for inspections operations. The facility had USDA inspection status years back but has not sought to reestablish it since their volume of work as a custom exempt facility is satisfactory. However, if resources became available to assist with the capital improvements the site may be interested to revisit this matter to offer government-inspected services again.

This custom-exempt facility was the only existing facility that was willing to evaluate expansion into government-inspected services if financial assistance was made available in the future.¹⁸

Scarborough’s Custom-Exempt Facility and Animal Holding Pens



¹⁸ The author provided the owners with information and links to the MPPEP Round 2 Grant Opportunity that closed in November 2023.



Potential Site: Cuatro Hermanos Meat Market (San Diego, TX, Duval County)

This new meat market business opened in 2023 in the remote small city of San Diego, Texas.¹⁹ The family-owned business is fully invested in making the market a success and is actively evaluating the option to expand to establish a custom-exempt slaughter and processing facility. It sees more demand for this type of service in surrounding farm and ranch communities than government-inspected services.²⁰

A facility in this community would enable services to be provided within 50 miles for much of the geographic area represented by the four counties that comprise this region. In addition, the region would enable services to be provided to approximately 6 of the 10 Coastal Bend Region counties. However, as stated the proprietors are not interested in offering government-inspected services. If they pursue the project, they intend to offer custom exempt services for area farmers that wish to have animals harvested for their own consumption.

¹⁹ Treviño, Melissa Cantu, “Best Meat Market Award Goes to Newly Opened Business,” [Alice Echo News Journal](#) (Wed., July 12, 2023), p. A8.

²⁰ The author provided the owners with information and links to the MPPEP Round 2 Grant Opportunity that closed in November 2023.

Meat Market Storefront with Available Land Behind Building to Expand to Processing



POTENTIAL COLLABORATIVES FOR NEW SERVICES

Texas Green Growers CSA Cooperative

Padilla Farms secured commitments from eleven farmers from five different counties in its recent MPPEP grant application for project financial assistance to construct a new USDA government-inspections processing facility. Padilla Farms is the lead participant in the formation of the Texas Green Growers CSA Cooperative. The Cooperative recruits members to collectively supply products (produce, meat products, and dairy products) to supply products for farmers markets located in large metropolitan markets north of the Rio Grande Valley.

RGV Livestock Cooperative

The formation of this cooperative as a nonprofit is underway. Thanks to the assistance of the Texas Rural Cooperative Center of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), a group of farmers and ranchers aim to evaluate the financial viability of constructing and operating a new processing facility. The mix of animals that would be serviced is yet to be determined, as are other operational issues that must be addressed to determine the expected investment or buy-in amount that members would have to contribute.

It should be noted that some members are supportive of both the Padilla Farms project and the RGV Livestock Cooperative. They see the value in the projects collaborating to maximize the probability of success and to ensure that services are made available here in the Rio Grande Valley sooner than later given the burden that they all endure to transport animals 225 miles to the north.

Multi-Regional HUB Aggregator Concept

This strategy was described in detail in the Executive Summary. Additional details are provided here to help evaluate it as an approach for any of the above listed collaboratives to consider for placement of a processing facility.

The strategy would be to select a location located in the geographic center of three of four of the Study Regions that would serve the needs of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the Coastal Bend, and the South Border Plains. The site would be known as the HUB Aggregator to receive animals from these three Regions. Farmers and ranchers in the fourth region, the South Central Plains, would not be expected to participate in supporting this new facility. They continue to have relatively good access to services in the existing USDA-inspected site in Poth, Texas.

Maps 4 and 5 illustrated the 50-mile and 75-mile radius coverage of the sites if located in Alice in Jim Wells County or Falfurrias in Brooks County. It should be noted that both counties are surrounded by farming and ranching communities that span the three regions of this study.

Gulf Coast Livestock Auction. Alice is also the location of Gulf Coast Livestock Auction that provides services to farmers and ranchers from throughout South Texas.²¹ It handles the sale of approximately 35,000 farm animals per year. Producers transport their animals to this site to sell to buyers seeking beef cattle or other species of animals for meat production, normally to fill large meat packing orders.

However, the owner states that he receives at least 8-10 calls per month from farm animal owners asking for referrals where to have their animal(s) harvested for their own needs. The auction business owns vacant property next to the auction facility where a processing facility could be constructed. However, it has not researched the costs and requirements to proceed with such a project. The owner observed that there would be an inherent cost savings to farm owners that transported their animals to the auction facility for sale and then have them harvested next door at a processing facility. Also, because of its location and relationships with farmers and ranchers a HUB Aggregator Facility could propose to the auction business to be contracted as the Regional Aggregator to aggregate animals for the HUB Processing Facility.

Under a HUB Aggregator concept, each of the participating Regions would have a designated lead aggregator known as a Regional Aggregator that would collect animals from participating producers. The role of the Regional Aggregator would be to coordinate with the Hub Facility on the animals needed seasonally for harvesting. This coordination would ensure the appropriate volume of animals to be harvested to maintain performance goals and generate the monthly income needed to sustain the operation.

The HUB Facility would compensate the lead Regional Aggregators for their roles. The HUB Facility would hire other professionals to operate the HUB, including management, accounting, and marketing. Even farmers and ranchers would improve their operational capacity. As the collaboration among producers would increase, so would the opportunities for sharing of information on markets, potential sales, retailing of products, product safety, marketing, distribution, farm and ranch production best practices, and continuing education and training, among other areas.²²

The aggregation of animals in a HUB facility also reduces the risk of seasonal lows in the number of animals to be processed. For example, deer hunting season (October-February) shuts down custom-exempt processing services for domestic farm animal harvesting as the site dedicates itself to process game animals. The fact that animals would be produced by three different regions increases the ability of the processor to keep its employees hired and to continue to cover operational costs.

²¹ <https://www.gulfcoastlivestock.com/>

²² Gwin, et al, ERS Report No. 150, p. v.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The Executive Summary detailed the following principal challenges that must be addressed and overcome if a new government inspections slaughter processing facility (or facilities) are to be established to serve the needs of South Texas' smaller producers.

- Even a Small Facility will Require High Capital Requirements to Launch
- The Facility Must Secure a Consistent and Regional Supply of Animals to Harvest
- Labor Supply Needs to be Resolved Before a Facility is Constructed
- Specialized Equipment Must be Planned for Procurement Before a Facility is Constructed
- Farmers and Ranchers May Require Sales and Marketing Technical Assistance to Attempt Sales of Government-Inspected Products

The following challenges must also be taken into consideration. Some can be addressed; others simply cannot be controlled (e.g., drought conditions) but are relevant.

Farmer Partnership Formation When Financial Commitment is Required

A fundamental factor to enable a small processing plant to operate successfully to meet costs and potentially make a profit is the ability to have enough volume of cattle and other farm animals. An estimated minimum number of animals annually is 450 heads.²³ Farmers may opt to see whether a plant will provide services effectively before they agree to act in a more coordinated manner, such as through a coordinated association or cooperative. For smaller producers with tight profit margins with existing operations, their willingness to invest in a plant is likely to be tested only after they see whether a plant can meet their needs. Unlike larger farmers or ranchers, they may not have the capital to risk the upfront costs of forming and building a collectively controlled and operated facility.

Regardless of the type of partnership (e.g., cooperative, trade association, CSA suppliers) that area farmers pursue, keeping members involved when attention turns to funding a new construction will continue to be a recurring challenge. Each producer will carefully evaluate whether it is in their best interest to invest their limited funds to help fund a startup project. This collective commitment will need to be demonstrated whether the financing is commercial or governmental. USDA grant funding, for instance, requires a match commitment from the partnership. As mentioned in the study, the Round 2 of MPPEP grants for processing sites required a 70% match from applicants.

²³ Gwin, et al, ERS Report Number 150, p. 6.

Higher Cost and Less Availability of Hay and Grain Feed for Beef Cattle

Even if processing services were available closer to farms and ranches, continued drought conditions will continue to increase the costs of raising beef cattle. Smaller farmers and ranchers that raise grass-fed livestock and rely on pasture are particularly affected. At the same time, the higher costs of feed grain and hay supplies as substitutes for pasture grass can discourage farmers from adding beef cattle to their small herds.

High Match Requirements under MPPEP Grant Program

MPPEP was authorized to provide financial support for projects that establish or expand slaughter and processing facilities. However, Round 1 required an 80% cost match while Round 2 required a 70% match. These high match requirements can discourage partnerships from applying. With such a high amount to provide, individual farmers and ranchers or partnerships may opt to continue bearing the costs of poor access if those costs are less than the costs of investing in a new facility.

The author experienced that reaction when explaining the MPPEP grant opportunity to producers. Collaboratives, through increased suppliers of financial investment, may have a stronger financial posture. However, as mentioned above, recruitment of enough members or partners to accept the financial risks of a new facility is a principal challenge to overcome.

Supplying Meat Products to School Districts

All 25 counties of the study scope have cattle production. All have the opportunity to establish supply relationships for meat products to supply school districts. Per federal guidelines, though, all meat products served at schools must have been processed at a USDA- or state-inspected facility.²⁴ Harvesting animals at custom-exempt facilities will not be a solution if a partnership wished to sell to a school district. Suppliers through a farmer partnership will still have to transport their animals to a government-inspections approved facility. The collective group would also have to substantially increase their members to ensure the projected amount of meat products could be delivered with confidence throughout the school year.

²⁴ Policy Memo SP 01-2016, CACFP 01-2016, SFSP 01-2016, Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game, and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs: Food Safety Clarifications for Child Nutrition Programs, Questions and Answers (USDA-FNS, Alexandria, Virginia, October 22, 2015), p. 1.

OPPORTUNITIES

The Executive Summary detailed the following principal opportunities to support the establishment of a new government inspections slaughter processing facility (or facilities) to serve the needs of South Texas' smaller producers.

- Establish a Safety Net of Local Products for Food Supply
- Increased Texas Urban Demand for Locally Raised Products
- Opportunity for Small and Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers to Collaborate
- Opportunity to Innovate through Multi-Regional Collaboration: HUB Aggregator Facility
- Federal Investments in New Harvesting Sites

The following partnership opportunities can also be taken into consideration by new project proponents, funders, and decision makers that are approached for support.

Partnerships with Higher Education

There are two potential areas to develop partnerships with community colleges or universities.

One area is to jointly pursue federal or state funding to fund faculty development and student training for careers in meat processing services. For example, the Texas A&M University-Kingsville College of Agriculture and National Resources hosts the Manager Education and Agriculture Technical Skills (MEATS) Workforce program. The purpose is to train underrepresented students to meet the labor needs of local and regional meal and poultry facilities through the development of production workers, supervisors, and managers.²⁵ The National Institute of Food and Agriculture of USDA awarded a grant of \$950,000 for this initiative that includes Palo Alto Community College in San Antonio.²⁶

Community colleges are located in multiple cities in the South Texas Area of Study including: Harlingen, Brownsville, Weslaco, McAllen, Laredo, Alice, and Beeville.²⁷ The two statewide flagship university systems – the University of Texas and Texas A&M — also have campuses in South Texas. There is an opportunity for a partnership between small farms and ranches and

²⁵ <https://www.tamuk.edu/agriculture/research/usdahsigrants/MEATS.html>

²⁶ The 2023 grant award to Texas A&M University Kingsville is described at: <https://www.tamuk.edu/news/2023/04/USDA-grant-g geared-toward-preparing-students-to-work-in-the-meat-poultry-industry.html>

²⁷ <https://tacc.org/tacc/texas-community-colleges/south>

these educational institutions to design similar programs focusing on labor development for slaughter and processing facilities. Such skills are specialized and in short supply.

The other area is through increased collaboration between university departments and the farmer partnerships. Certain academic departments, such as business management, marketing, accounting, and physical sciences, can be recruited to conduct classroom work and research studies focusing on the needs of smaller farms and ranches. This collaboration would enhance the business and agricultural production technical assistance that universities may be providing already, as the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley-Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Advancement is doing.²⁸

Partnership with Local Nonprofits

The USDA-funded nonprofit, HOPE for Small Farm Sustainability,²⁹ is developing the infrastructure to transport, store, and deliver local produce, meat products, and dairy products to large urban markets such as Houston and Dallas.³⁰ This type of community-based initiative can be enhanced with expanded partnerships with farmers and ranchers throughout the study area of this project. This example of the nonprofit HOPE is just one. Other nonprofits (e.g., food banks) that promote or benefit from community-based food production are also ripe for recruitment as partners with the farmer cooperatives.

Partnerships to Strengthen Local Community Support and Advocacy

Community or Local Government Advocacy.

Any proposal to establish a new processing facility must comply with applicable local government zoning, environmental, construction, and public health regulations. The mix of applicable rules to comply with will vary depending on whether a project is proposed to be built within a city or in a rural area that is under the jurisdiction of the county government. Even if a farmer or business complies with all regulations, the choice of the business activity of slaughter and processing must be approved by the appointed and elective bodies that review proposals.

If a jurisdiction or if a local community opposes the establishment of a facility, a farmers partnership or cooperative increases the number of voices explaining the need for the facility. This can be an influential factor to also show the decision makers about the viability and financial feasibility of the proposed facility.

²⁸ <https://www.utrgv.edu/sara/>

²⁹ <https://hopeforsfs.org/>

³⁰ HOPE for Small Farm Sustainability was awarded Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) funding to establish this local food supply distribution network to connect farmers with urban markets and buyers seeking Texas-grown and raised products.

State Legislature Advocacy (2025)

The Texas Legislature meets every two years in odd-numbered years. The next regular session will convene in a year (January 2025). An established collaborative or partnership of small farmers and ranchers can join the past successful advocacy efforts of entities such as the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance.³¹ The Alliance takes the lead in educating legislators about the needs of small farms and ranches in Texas. It intends to continue its advocacy for other reforms that will support small farmers and ranchers seeking more options to supply healthy food for consumers.

FARM Bill (2024 or 2025)

The legislation known as the FARM Bill that reauthorizes federal agriculture and related food programs was scheduled to be renewed in 2023. That action in Congress has been delayed until this year and may potentially be delayed until 2025. The FARM Bill is a powerful platform by which small farmers and ranchers can advocate for reforms that enhance their ability to gain more meat sales to consumers.

That is the impetus for the proposed PRIME Act that may potentially be integrated in a final FARM Bill. In brief, farmers and ranchers that order the harvesting of their farm animals by custom-exempt slaughter and processing facilities would be allowed to sell the meat products to consumers, grocery stores, restaurants, and other establishments in the state where they are produced.³²

FINAL POINT

The establishment of additional government-inspected services has the potential to level some of the playing field for family-owned farms and ranches that are committed to agriculture and committed to the integrity of our food sources. Their request for more equity in access is not a request for a handout to give them direct relief. Their request is that taxpayer-funded government-inspection services be equally available to them.

Large farm and corporate-supported producers of beef cattle do not have the same burden to access services. Large packing plants have designed their business model to demand large numbers of animals to process to reduce production costs and keep profit margins high. Assisting small producers does not fit in this business model. Hence, small producers are left to fend for themselves through regional partnerships to make solutions happen. This study presents strategies and options for South Texas' small farms and ranches to use in their commendable efforts to provide food for us despite this market reality.

³¹ <https://farmandranchfreedom.org/>

³² <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/2814?overview=closed>

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Padilla Farm, LLC
dba/Yahweh's All Natural Farm & Garden
19741 Morris Road
Harlingen, TX 78552
956-730-0096 (Saul Padilla, Co-Owner)
yahwehs.farmgarden@gmail.com

FARM ANIMAL SLAUGHTER AND PROCESSING

Do you raise farm animals for meat products?

**Do you use slaughter/processing services that
are USDA or State-Inspected?**

Do you need to access these services?

*See attached Survey. We are studying the needs
of farmers and ranchers in South Texas. Please
tell us your views.*



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SURVEY

Study on the Need for Additional Meat Slaughter/Processing Services in South Texas

Information About Survey Participant:

Location of Farm/Ranch/Business _____

Farm/Ranch Size (Acres) _____

Gender Male _____ Female _____

Veteran Status Yes _____ No _____

Ethnicity Hispanic or Latino _____ Black or African-American _____
(Mark all that Asian-American _____ Native American _____
apply.) White or Caucasian _____ Other _____

Age 18-24 _____ 25-34 _____ 35-44 _____
 45-54 _____ 55-64 _____ 65+ _____

Type of Animal(s) Raised: _____

Type of Farming/Ranching you Practice:

Traditional _____ All-Natural _____ Organic (certified) _____

Other Method _____

Other Agricultural Products You Grow:

Produce-Vegetables (Type) _____

Produce-Fruit (Type) _____

Dairy Products _____

Other _____

Question 1

Do you raise farm animals to process (i.e., slaughter) for meat products?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what kinds of animals?

Question 2

Do you slaughter animals yourself or do you pay for the service at a processing facility or business or farm?

Process myself _____

Pay for service at (name and location) _____

Question 3

Is the slaughter/processing site:

- USDA Inspected _____
- State Inspected _____
- Both USDA & State Inspected _____
- Not inspected by USDA or State _____
- Do not know if inspected _____

Question 4

Why do you process animals? (mark all that apply)

- For our own consumption _____
- To supply my food service business (e.g., food truck, restaurant) _____
- To sell at our farm _____
- To sell at a farmers market or other public venue _____
- To sell to local grocers _____
- To sell to local restaurants _____
- To sell to any of the above through online orders _____

Question 5

How many times a year do you travel to the facility for processing services? _____

Question 6

How many miles do you travel (one way) to get to the processing site? _____
How many animals per year do you take to the site? _____

Question 7

Do you have to return on another date to pick up your meat products?
Yes _____ No _____ Sometimes _____

Question 8

How many miles is reasonable to travel (one way) to a slaughter/processing site?

Question 9

Would you raise more animals if a slaughter and processing site was located closer to your farm, ranch, or /business?
Yes _____ Probably _____ Maybe _____ No _____

Question 10

Please insert in the box below any additional comments you wish to provide.

Thank you for your confidential responses.

Your feedback will help Padilla Farm to report to USDA on the need for more processing services south of San Antonio. Please email your completed survey to storres@stsoluciones.net or mail to Padilla Farm at the Harlingen address provided on the first page of this survey.

If you have any questions, please contact Salomon Torres, Soluciones Consulting, at 956-341-5202 or salomontorres22@gmail.com.



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ANIMALES DE GRANJA SACRIFICIO Y PROCESAMIENTO

¿Cría usted animales de granja para obtener productos cárnicos?

¿Utiliza servicios de sacrificio/procesamiento inspeccionados por el USDA o por el Estado?

¿Necesita acceder a estos servicios?

Véase la encuesta adjunta. Estamos estudiando las necesidades de los agricultores y ganaderos del sur de Texas. Por favor, danos su opinión.



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ENCUESTA

Estudio sobre la necesidad de servicios adicionales de procesamiento de carne en el sur de Texas

Información sobre el participante en la encuesta:

Ubicación de la granja/rancho/empresa _____

Tamaño de la granja/rancho (acres) _____

Género Hombre _____ Mujer _____

Estatus de veterano Sí _____ No _____

Etnia (marque todo lo que corresponda):

Hispano o Latino _____ Negro o Afroamericano _____ Asiático _____

Amerindio/Nativo de Alaska _____ Blanco _____ Otros _____

Edad 18-24 _____ 25-34 _____ 35-44 _____

 45-54 _____ 55-64 _____ 65+ _____

Tipo de animal(es) criado(s): _____

Tipo de agricultura/ganadería que práctica:

Tradicional _____ Totalmente natural _____ Orgánico (certificada) _____

Otros métodos _____

Otros productos agrícolas que cultiva:

Productos-Vegetales (Tipo) _____

Productos-Frutas (Tipo) _____

Productos lácteos _____

Otros _____

Pregunta 1:

¿Cría animales de granja para procesarlos (es decir, sacrificarlos) para obtener productos cárnicos?

Sí _____ No _____

En caso afirmativo, ¿qué tipo de animales?

Pregunta2:

¿Sacrifica usted mismo a los animales o paga por el servicio en una instalación, empresa o granja de procesamiento?

Los proceso por mi cuenta _____

Pago por el servicio en (nombre y lugar) _____

Pregunta3:

Es el lugar de sacrificio/procesamiento:

Inspeccionado por el USDA _____

Inspeccionado por el Estado _____

Inspeccionado por el USDA y el Estado _____

No inspeccionado por el USDA o el Estado _____

No se sabe si es inspeccionado _____

Pregunta4:

¿Por qué procesa animales? (marque todo lo que corresponda)

Para nuestro propio consumo _____

Para abastecer mi negocio de servicios alimentarios (por ejemplo, carritos de comida, restaurante) _____

Para vender en nuestra granja _____

Para vender en un mercado de agricultores u otro lugar público _____

Para vender a las tiendas de comestibles locales _____

Para vender a los restaurantes locales _____

Para vender a cualquiera de los anteriores a través de pedidos en línea (“online orders”) _____

Pregunta5:

¿Cuántas veces al año viaja a las instalaciones para adquirir los servicios de procesamiento? _____

Pregunta6:

¿Cuántas millas recorre (de ida) para llegar al lugar de procesamiento? _____
¿Cuántos animales lleva al año? _____

Pregunta7:

¿Tiene que volver en otra fecha para recoger sus productos cárnicos?
Sí _____ No _____ A veces _____

Pregunta8:

¿Cuántas millas es razonable recorrer (de ida) hasta un lugar desacrificio/procesamiento? _____

Pregunta9:

¿Criaría más animales si el lugar de sacrificio y/o procesamiento estuvieran más cerca de su granja, rancho o empresa?
Sí _____ Probablemente _____ Quizás _____ No _____

Pregunta 10:

Por favor, introduzca en este espacio de abajo cualquier comentario adicional que desee aportar.

Gracias por sus respuestas confidenciales.

Sus comentarios ayudarán a Padilla Farm a informar al USDA sobre la necesidad de más servicios de procesamiento al sur de San Antonio. Por favor, envíe su encuesta completa por correo electrónico a storres@stsoluciones.net o por correo a Padilla Farm a la dirección de Harlingen proporcionada en la primera página de esta encuesta.

Si tiene alguna pregunta, póngase en contacto con Salomón Torres, de Soluciones Consulting, en el 956-341-5202 o ensalomontorres22@gmail.com.

**DO YOU FARM OR RANCH
IN ANY OF THESE 25 COUNTIES?**
*¿TIENE UNA GRANJA O RANCHO
EN ALGUNO DE ESTOS 25 CONDADOS?*

Do you raise farm animals for meat products?
¿Cria usted animales de granja para obtener productos cárnicos?

Do you use slaughter/processing services that are USDA or State-Inspected?
¿Utiliza servicios de sacrificio/procesamiento inspeccionados por el USDA o por el Estado?

Do you need to access these services?
¿Necesita acceder a estos servicios?

We are studying the needs of farmers and ranchers in South Texas. Please tell us your views. (see other side)
Estamos estudiando las necesidades de los agricultores y ganaderos del sur de Texas. Por favor, danos su opinión. (ver otro lado)



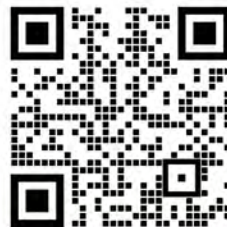
SURVEY
**STUDY ON THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL MEAT SLAUGHTER/PROCESSING SERVICES
 IN SOUTH TEXAS**

Your feedback will help Padilla Farm to report to USDA on the need for more processing services south of San Antonio.

Your responses will be **confidential**.

Complete your survey at
<https://yahwehfarm.com/farm-animal-processing/>
 or Email it to storres@stsoluciones.net or
 Mail to Padilla Farm in Harlingen

TAKE OUR SURVEY ONLINE



Any questions? Contact Salomon Torres, Soluciones Consulting,
 at 956-341-5202 or salomontorres22@gmail.com.

SOUTH TEXAS LACKS FARM/RANCH ANIMAL SLAUGHTER/PROCESSING SITES

Farmer & Rancher Views are Needed to Propose Solutions

TAKE OUR SURVEY ONLINE

Complete the Anonymous Survey at:
[HTTPS://YAHWEHFARM.COM/FARM-ANIMAL-PROCESSING/](https://yahwehfarm.com/farm-animal-processing/)
 or
Call 956-341-5202

Research Project Sponsor: yahwehfarm.com
 Contact Salomon Torres, storres@stsoluciones.net

Congressman Cuellar awards \$1,000,000 to Local 4-H



By Nereida Garza and Photo by Jose Sanz

Congressman Henry Cuellar paid a visit to Zapata last Friday to award a federal earmark to benefit local 4-H for the renovation and upgrades to the 4-H arena. Upgrades will include bathrooms, bleachers and an all weather roof

The facilities will be able to be used year round by local 4-H groups and other local organizations.

Congressman Cuellar spoke to guests in attendance at the Zapata County Courthouse. Cuellar said, "I secured this federal earmark to ensure our stu-

dents, young farmers and ranchers, and community have a reliable facility to enjoy for livestock related activities anytime throughout the year. The facility is a pillar of Zapata County and the upgraded arena will double as an emergency venue and give Zapata County residents peace of mind knowing they have the facilities to endure during times of need. Currently the lack of shaded cover and limited resources significantly restricts the arena's usage. Thank you Zapata County Judge Joe Rathmell, Commissioners' Court, and Texas A&M Agrilife Jesús Rodríguez in working with me to secure this federal earmark."

The event was hosted by Zapata

County Judge Joseph Rathmell. Students from Zapata County Independent School District, FFA members and 4-H participants were also in attendance along with Zapata County officials. Those in attendance were Congressman Henry Cuellar; Zapata County Judge Joe Rathmell; Sheriff Ray Del Bosque; Commissioners Pete Morales and Robert Garza, Agrilife Extension Agent Jesús Rodríguez; Justice of the Peace Ramon Benavides and Olga Bruni; and Zapata County Independent School District Fernando Rodríguez, Board President Manuel González Jr. and Board Member Luis Guevara.

Don't Tell This Texas County That Illegal Border Crossings Are 'Down'

-tion since January 2021 — continue to barge into the country between border ports of entry. A recent news report from the Epoch Times examined how a small Texas county is being overrun by increasingly brazen illegal aliens.

Kinney County, three counties and 200 miles north of Zapata, placed cameras at various spots along its 16-mile border with Mexico. In the first six months of this year, they detected a whopping 29,000 migrants walking into the county.



More than 100 migrants were found hiding in rail cars passing through Kinney County last May.

(Kinney County's total population is 3,120.)

"To our knowledge, none have been apprehended, and their whereabouts today are unknown," Sheriff Brad Coe said.

Ben Binnion, an area rancher, recalled that back in 2014, Border Patrol apprehended 37 migrants crossing his land. "I'm getting 200 people a night on average on my trail cameras for two years solid now." He has encountered migrants from as far away as Congo, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and China on his land.

Continued on Page 3

ZCFD FIGHTING LARGE BRUSH FIRE

August 8 was in the San Ygnacio area on FM 3169. Four brush trucks, one unit from Salineño Fire Department, a strike team out of Edinburg and the Texas Forest Service from Cotulla, Texas have arrived to help fight the fire. Video of an airplane spreading red fire-retardant powder was posted to the Zapata County Fire Department's Facebook page, was actively fighting the fire. According to the ZCFD's Facebook page, the fire began on Monday, August 7 and by early afternoon the blaze had already crossed ranch lands. Firefighting units, along with a dozer from the County of Zapata were deployed to fight the fire.

As of Wednesday, August 9 the fire was 85% contained and approximately three-thousand acres have burned. The fire fighting crews are having trouble containing the fire with the high winds that hit our area. Dozer operators continue to make fire breaks to help fight the fire. According to the Zapata County Fire Department, the fire has not crossed FM 3169.

No comment as of yet from Zapata County Fire Chief Daniel Arriaga. More information coming in next week's edition of the Zapata County News.



Collision at McDonald's

First responders attended to minor injuries sustained during the collision. Zapata County Fire Department transported one patient to a local Laredo Hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

Zapata County Sheriff's Office is investigating the contributing factor of the collision.

Starr Republican Party experiences Strong Surge in Voter Support, Strength

by the switch of State Representative Ryan Guillen, in

office since January 2003, to the Republican Party in late 2021. Guillen defeated challengers in the 2022 Republican primary and the November 2022 general

election.

The surge in Republican support has mirrored the party's growth in other South Texas counties, including Zapata, which President Trump carried in November 2020 and Governor Abbott and most Republican candidates won in November 2022.

Toni Trevino, Starr County Republican Party Secretary and (Voting) Precinct One Chairman, contended, "The November 2022 election results showed that Republicans are here to stay." She noted that "a Republican women's group in Starr County was formed in February 2023. Our local club is affiliated with the Texas Federation of Republican Women and also the national federation."

Continued on Page 3

BACK TO SCHOOL

Faith Academy now enrolling Pre-K to 4th Grade offering half or full day kinder

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MEMBER OF ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS INT'L

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Small class sizes

AFFORDABLE

MONTHLY TUITION:

\$220 ALL FULL DAY STUDENTS

1/2 DAY KINDER: \$150

SOUTH TEXAS LACKS FARM/RANCH ANIMAL SLAUGHTER/PROCESSING SITES

POTH, TX nearest USDA & State-Inspected facilities

Farmer & Rancher Views are Needed to Propose Solutions

TAKE OUR SURVEY ONLINE

Online Survey

Complete the Anonymous Survey at: [HTTPS://YAHWEHFARM.COM/FARM-ANIMAL-PROCESSING/](https://yahwehfarm.com/farm-animal-processing/) or Call 958-341-5202

Research Project Sponsor: yahwehfarm.com Contact Salomon Torres, storres@stsoluciones.net

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Continued on Page 3

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Ukraine says its drones damaged Russian warship

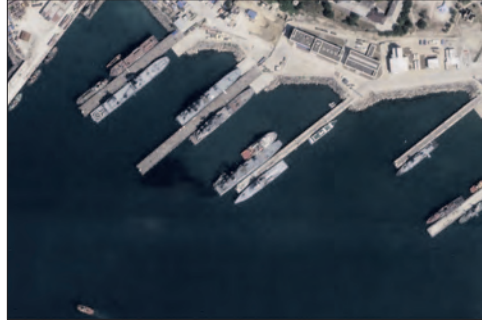
BY HANNA ARIHIROVA AND EMMA BURROWS ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine said its sea drones struck a major Russian port Friday and damaged a warship in an attack that underlined Kyiv's growing naval capabilities as the Black Sea becomes an increasingly important battleground in the war.

The strike on Novorossiysk halted maritime traffic for a few hours and marked the first time a commercial Russian port has been targeted in the nearly 18-month-old conflict. The port has a naval base, shipbuilding yards and an oil terminal, and is key for exports. It lies about 110 kilometers (about 60 miles) east of Crimea, where Russia's Defense Ministry said it thwarted another attack.

The Security Service of Ukraine and the country's navy carried out the attack that damaged the Olenegorsk Goryak, a landing vessel of the Russian navy, according to an official with the security service. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to give the information to the media, said the attack rendered the ship unable to perform combat missions.

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated



This satellite photo appears to show the damaged Russian landing vessel Olenegorsk Goryak leaking oil while docked at Novorossiysk, Russia, Friday.

Press appeared to show the ship leaking oil. An image from Planet Labs, taken a few hours after the attack, showed a ship dockside with another vessel next to it. The ship in the image matched the measurements of the Olenegorsk Goryak, as well as known physical features of the vessel. Images posted on social media showed a ship listing.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy noted that he had received a report from the country's security service, the SBU,

but didn't say what was in it. "I will only say that we are all grateful to the Security Service of Ukraine for pushing back the war to the aggressor state. What you bring to the world, you end up with the same," he said. Oblique references to attacks carried out against Russia are common for Ukrainian officials, who often do not take credit for them or only do so days after the fact.

Friday's attack was the latest in a series of strikes inside Russia, including

pol in Moscow-annexed Crimea.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Zelenskyy, heralded the latest attack, saying it showed "drones are changing the rules of the game ... and ultimately destroying the value of the Russian fleet."

Russia's far superior navy has controlled the seas in the war so far. Its ships have regularly launched cruise missiles at major ports and cities across Ukraine, and they have largely blockaded the country's coast as well as mined the Black Sea, making passage through it treacherous.

Podolyak's remarks and other recent attacks in the sea and on the Kerch Bridge connecting Crimea to Russia could indicate Ukraine is trying to change that dynamic.

With the latest assault, "Kyiv showed that it can attack any vessel of the Black Sea Fleet, no matter the distance," said Ukrainian military analyst Roman Svytan.

The end of the grain deal, under which ships carry wheat and other food from Ukrainian ports, were promised safe passage, "untied Kyiv's hands," he said, predicting the frequency of attacks on Russian ships would only increase.

While Friday's attack served as an important morale booster for Ukraine,

challenging Russia's naval power in the Black Sea will be hard for Ukraine.

The Russian Black Sea Fleet has nearly 50 warships, seven submarines and many support vessels, dwarfing the capability of Ukraine, which said it lost more than 80% of its naval capabilities after Moscow's illegal annexation of Crimea.

Despite Russia's superiority, Ukrainian missiles last year sank the fleet's flagship, the Moskva missile cruiser, and destroyed the Saratov landing ship in the occupied port of Berdyansk. Several more vessels have reportedly been damaged.

The Russian Defense Ministry claimed that the navy fended off Friday's attack, saying that its ships destroyed two Ukrainian sea drones. Footage published on Russian social media channels appeared to show a ship firing into the sea and a burning object exploding.

But other images that appeared on messaging app channels claimed to show the Olenegorsk Goryak listing to one side, and some Russian military bloggers confirmed that it was damaged. Ukrainian media outlets also carried footage they said was from a drone's onboard camera showing it approaching the Russian landing ship.

Trump pleads not guilty from afar to 2nd round of charges in classified docs case

BY DAVID LYONS SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Former President Donald Trump removed the need to fly to Florida next week when he pleaded not guilty Friday in a paper filing to three new charges brought against him in a superseding indictment related to his handling of classified documents after he left office.

In doing so, he waived a court appearance in Fort Pierce, Florida, that was scheduled for Aug. 10 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Shanick Mills Maynard.

Trump, 77, personally appeared in a U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., on Thursday to plead not guilty to a third federal indictment brought against him by prosecutors. The long-awaited indictment brought by Special Counsel Jack Smith, whose office also brought the documents case, alleges the former president orchestrated an illegal attempt to overturn the 2020 presidential election, which he lost to



In this handout photo provided by the U.S. Department of Justice, stacks of boxes can be observed in the White and Gold Ballroom of former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida.

President Joe Biden. Following that plea, Trump boarded his private jetliner and flew back to New Jersey, where he is spending the summer.

The not-guilty plea entered in the South Florida federal court in the classified documents case and posted to the case docket on Friday took the form of a one-page filing titled, "Waiver of Appearance for Arraignment."

"I have received a copy

of the Indictment and the plea is NOT GUILTY to the charged offense(s)," the filing reads. "I am aware that I have the right under Rule 10 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure to be present in court for my arraignment. I waive my right to appear in court at my arraignment."

The document was signed and dated Friday by Trump and by his Florida-based attorney, Christopher Kise.

INVITATION TO BIDDERS

The County of Hidalgo would like to invite you to submit a bid on the following:

Bid No.:	Bid Description:	Opening Date:
6553-94-0309-5200-0000-UCP-AA	GLO 2016 State Mitigation Competition Hidalgo County Main Floodwater Channel Expansion - Phase 2, Segment D	Wednesday, August 16, 2023 3:00 p.m.

Specifications: A free digital copy of drawings and technical specifications may be obtained from Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1, submit via email request to: nora.cavazos@hccdd1.org or by phone at (956) 292-7080.

Pre-Bid Conference: A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on Monday, August 7, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. at the Urban County Program office located at 1916 Tesoro Street, Pharr, TX 78577 or by virtual access by calling the Urban County Program before 9:30 A.M. on the day of the Conference at (956) 787-8127.

Requirements: Upon submitting sealed bid, bidders are required to properly identify (handwritten, typed, or printed) sealed envelope and/or packet as follows: Bidder's name and address on the upper left-hand corner of the sealed envelope and/or package and Bid No. 6553-94-0309-5200-0000-UCP-AA - GLO 2016 State Mitigation Competition, Hidalgo County Main Floodwater Channel Expansion - Phase 2, Segment D, on the lower left-hand corner of sealed envelope and/or packet. Overnight mail must also be properly labeled on the outside of express envelope or package.

Bidder understands that the County reserves the right to award this contract on the basis determined on the procurement overview, as listed on Appendix "B" in accordance with the law of the State of Texas to waive any/all formalities or irregularity, to reject any and all submission received, to make awards to more than one offeror based on the individual lowest responsible bid per unit, or to accept the bid considered the best and most advantageous to the County. By order of the Commissioners' Court of the County of Hidalgo, Texas the project was approved on the 30th day of November, 2021.

The sealed bid must contain one (1) original and one (1) USB with complete bid required documents (including all bonds) and must be clearly identified and addressed for delivery to:

Ignacio Amezcua, MBA, CTM, CTC, Purchasing Director
Hidalgo County Purchasing Department

US Postal Mail/Courier Address:
2812 S. Business Hwy. 281
Hidalgo County New Administration Building
Edinburg, Texas 78539

Physical Location:
2802 S. Business Hwy. 281
Hidalgo County New Administration Building
(Southeast of Canton Rd & Business 281)
Edinburg, Texas 78539

Deadline: Sealed bids will be accepted until Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. at which time they will be opened in the Hidalgo County Purchasing Department Conference Room at Physical Location: 2802 S. Business Hwy 281, Hidalgo County New Administration Building in Edinburg, Texas 78539. No facsimiles or late arrivals will be accepted. Any bid received after that time will not be opened and will be returned.

Bid Security: Bid Security in the amount of 5% of the largest possible total of bids submitted must accompany each bid in accordance with the Instruction to Bidders. The surety must be a guaranteed or surety company acceptable to the Hidalgo County and listed in U. S. Treasury Circular No. 570.

Davis-Bacon Prevailing Wage Rates: This project is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development Community Development Block Grant Program and bidders must adhere to Texas State Prevailing Wage Requirements for Hidalgo County and Davis-Bacon Federal Wage Rates, including Certified Payroll. Be advised applicable wage rates may change.

SAM.gov Requirement: All vendors, contractors and professional service providers are required to obtain a Unique Entity Identification (UEI) Number and have an ACTIVE status on the Sam.gov website. The UCP is a federally funded grant that needs to comply with 24 CFR 200 therefore, a Certificate Regarding Debarment must be submitted and certified by the UCP prior to the County Commissioner's Court Agenda for contract award and approval.

Section 3/WMBE: The County of Hidalgo will actively encourage participation of Section 3 businesses and Women and Minority Business Enterprises (WMBEs) on this project. All Section 3 business contractors, potential Section 3 business contractors, and WMBE contractors are strongly encouraged to submit bids. Please contact Hidalgo County-Urban County Program at 956-787-8127 for inquiries concerning Section 3 or specifics on how to become a Section 3 business. HUD Regulations 24 CFR 75.7. Requirements applicable to HUD NOFAs for section 3 covered programs states the following: (a) Certification of compliance with part 135. All notices of funding availability (NOFAs) issued by HUD that announce the availability of funding covered by section 3 shall include a provision in the NOFA that notifies applicants that section 3 and the regulations in part 75 are applicable to funding awards made under the NOFA. Additionally, the NOFA shall require as an application submission requirement (which may be specified in the NOFA or application kit) a certification by the applicant that the applicant will comply with the regulations in part 75. (For PHAs, this requirement will be met where a PHA Resolution in Support of the Application is submitted.) With respect to application evaluation, HUD will accept an applicant's certification unless there is evidence substantially challenging the certification. (b) Statement of purpose in NOFAs: (1) For competitively awarded assistance in which the grants are for activities administered by an HA, and those activities are anticipated to generate significant training, employment or contracting opportunities, the NOFA must include a statement that one of the purposes of the assistance is to give to the greatest extent feasible, and consistent with existing Federal, State and local laws and regulations, job training, employment, contracting and other economic opportunities to section 3 residents and section 3 business concerns.

IGNACIO AMEZCUA, MBA, CTM, CTC, DIRECTOR
HIDALGO COUNTY PURCHASING
STEVE DE LA GARZA, DIRECTOR
HIDALGO COUNTY URBAN COUNTY PROGRAM

SOUTH TEXAS LACKS FARM/RANCH ANIMAL SLAUGHTER/PROCESSING SITES
Farmer & Rancher Views are Needed to Propose Solutions

Complete the Anonymous Survey at:
[HTTPS://YAHWEHFARM.COM/FARM-ANIMAL-PROCESSING/](https://yahwehfarm.com/farm-animal-processing/)
or
Call 956-341-5202

Research Project Sponsor: yahwehfarm.com
Contact: Salomon Torres, star@yahwehfarm.com

EXTENDED SURVEY DEADLINE: AUG. 31, 2023



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SOUTH TEXAS LACKS FARM/RANCH ANIMAL SLAUGHTER/PROCESSING SITES

Farmer & Rancher Views are Needed to Propose Solutions

TAKE OUR SURVEY ONLINE

Complete the Anonymous Survey at:
[HTTPS://YAHWEHFARM.COM/FARM-ANIMAL-PROCESSING/](https://yahwehfarm.com/farm-animal-processing/)
 or
 Call 956-341-5202

Research Project Sponsor: yahwehfarm.com
 Contact Salomon Torres, storres@stsoluciones.net

SURVEY DEADLINE: AUG. 31, 2023

otos

See all photos



Headline NEWS



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Texas Association of Counties Risk Management Pool to give JWC funds for personal protective equipment

By Sarah Reyna
sreyna@cherryroad.com

Jim Wells County is saving local taxpayer dollars and protecting county employees on the job with the help of personal protective safety equipment and law enforcement equipment provided at no cost by the Texas Association of Counties Risk Management Pool (TAC RMP), according to a Texas Association of Counties press release.

County road construction

crews, building maintenance staffers, and law enforcement officers are routinely exposed to risks while on the job. The county received funds from TAC RMP to purchase safety equipment to help protect these employees as part of the 2023 TAC RMP Employee Safety Equipment Program.

"With these funds, the county will purchase safety equipment for field staff. We split the funding between the four precincts. We provide safety equipment without using



taxpayer dollars. Our budget is limited so it helps us, and we truly appreciate it," Jim Wells County Commissioner

Margie Gonzalez said.

Equipment available to the county ranges from personal protective equipment such as heat gear, hard hats, gloves, and hearing, eye and respiratory protection, to courthouse security devices, fire protection products and tactical safety gear for law enforcement.

"Most importantly, (the funds are) a reward for safety award which we work very hard from limiting liability on the county, therefore

saving taxpayers dollars," Commissioner Gonzalez added.

The county's membership in TAC RMP provides it with competitively priced risk management coverage and risk control services that are county government specific. With more than 400 members statewide, TAC RMP helps Texas counties and other counties governmental entities manage taxpayer dollars efficiently and promote worker safety.

Jim Wells County Judge attends annual conference



Jill Sklar, Jackson County Judge and Past President, Hidalgo County Commissioner David Fuentes - first-vice president, Installing President Bee County Commissioner Sammy Farias, and second-vice-president JWC Judge Pete Trevino. Submitted

By Melissa Cantu Trevino
mtrevino@cherryroad.com

Jim Wells County Judge Pete Trevino recently attended the South Texas County Judges and

Commissioners Association's 89th annual Conference. On Wednesday, June 28, Trevino was installed as the second vice-president. In two years, Trevino is expected to be President.

Duval County purchase equipment for landfill



Submitted

Submitted
mtrevino@cherryroad.com

SAN DIEGO - A brand new John Deere Tractor with shredder was purchased and delivered Tuesday, June 27, for the Duval County landfill. The tractor was purchased for

\$58,000.

The monies for the tractor was possible through another vehicle online auction. Duval County Sheriff Romeo Ramirez gave \$25,000 from the auction of seized vehicles.

TDLR files administrative cases against unlicensed contractors in nationwide effort

Submitted
sreyna@cherryroad.com

AUSTIN— Enforcement investigators for the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) opened 37 cases in June against people in the Houston area who offered to perform work but did not have electrician or air conditioning contractor licenses as required by state law.

The cases were filed after the investigators ran a one-week undercover sting as part of a national enforcement effort in June that was coordinated by the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies (NASCLA).

One of the unlicensed individuals who offered to perform work was a high-risk registered sex offender who had been convicted of indecency with a child several times.

"Hiring an unlicensed electrician or air conditioning contractor can

put you and your family at great risk," said TDLR Executive Director Mike Arismendez Jr. "Licensed service providers have had criminal background checks - and if they have certain criminal convictions, they can only work in specific areas under direct, in-person supervision."

During the sting, TDLR investigators contacted people who advertised electrical and air conditioning services in local newspapers or on social media and did not include license information in the ads as they're required to do by state law. Investigators have filed 37 enforcement cases against unlicensed electricians and air conditioning contractors who offered to perform unlicensed work during the sting.

Investigators opened 10 additional cases against licensed electricians and air conditioning contractors for other administrative violations.

In addition to the Houston

sting, TDLR Regulatory Program Management electrician program staff conducted jobsite sweeps in Bryan, Dripping Springs, Port Arthur, Beaumont, and Taylor to check the license status of 196 people working as electricians at various construction projects. Eight of the electricians were found to have expired licenses and two were unlicensed. All 10 now have either renewed their license or have obtained the required license. TDLR staff noted that the majority of those working as electricians were licensed as required.

TDLR urges Texas consumers hiring electricians and air conditioning and refrigeration contractors should always check to make sure their service providers are licensed by TDLR. Licensed service providers have completed training and passed examinations that cover regulations and building codes designed to

protect health and safety. They also have liability insurance.

When hiring a construction contractor, NASCLA recommends that consumers:

- Verify the contractor is actively licensed; always hire a licensed contractor
- Check TDLR licenses here: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch/>
- Get 2-3 estimates - don't automatically accept the lowest bid
- Check at least 3 references
- Require a written contract
- Don't make a large down payment; make payments as work is completed
- Monitor the job in progress
- Don't make the final payment until the job is complete
- Keep all paperwork related to your job

See the NASCLA website for more consumer awareness tips.

No access to Government-Inspected Cattle Slaughter and Processing Services in South Texas

Submitted
mtrevino@cherryroad.com

If you own a small farm or ranch in South Texas and you have cattle to harvest (i.e., slaughter) at a USDA or state-inspected facility, be ready to take your animals on a road trip to Poth, Texas (southeast of San Antonio) and get on a waiting list. For Padilla Farm in Harlingen that means a 450-mile round trip. A second-round trip at a later date is required to pick up the processed meats. The transportation costs (and time lost) can add up.

Small farmers and ranchers in the Rio Grande Valley, the Coastal Bend, and other areas of South Texas south of San Antonio want to sell properly inspected meat products at farmers markets and supply them to grocery stores, food trucks, and restaurants. But they cannot if the animals were not processed at a USDA or state-inspected facility.

Padilla Farm LLC, dba Yahweh's All-Natural Farm and Garden, in Harlingen, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley is addressing this problem. The



U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded Padilla Farm a Regional Food Systems Partnership grant to conduct a market and feasibility study to evaluate the lack of access to harvesting services in South Texas. Padilla Farm, in conjunction with its grant

partner, H.O.P.E. for Small Farm Sustainability (<https://www.hopeforfs.org/>), is seeking input from farmers and ranchers through an anonymous online survey. Farmers and ranchers can also request that a survey be mailed to them.

In explaining why Padilla Farm launched the feasibility study, cattle farmer Saul Padilla explained: "We want to encourage farmers and ranchers to raise more animals. But they may hesitate if they have to transport their cattle or other (animal) farms hours away just to access government-inspected sites. Farmers and ranchers are proud to supply the regional food system with local meat products. But we could provide more to consumers if we had more slaughter and processing services closer to our farms and ranches."

Padilla Farm urges local farmers and ranchers south of San Antonio to submit their views on this important issue. Their views are essential to propose solutions to this regional access problem. Below is the link to the anonymous survey. Respondents are urged to submit their survey by July 21.

Zapata County News Community

Wursham, Danner

No Access to Government-Inspected Cattle Slaughter and Processing Services in South Texas

Harlingen, TX, October 28, 2022. — If you farm or ranch in the Rio Grande Valley and you have cattle to harvest (i.e., slaughter) at a USDA or state-inspected facility, be ready to get on a waiting list and take your animals on a 225-mile road trip. Farmers and ranchers with only one or a few animals must transport them to 1 of 2 commercial facilities in Poth, Texas, located southeast of San Antonio.

A second round-trip at a later date is required to pick up the processed meats. The transportation costs (and time lost) can add up.

Padilla Farm LLC, dba Yahweh's All-Natural Farm & Garden, in Harlingen, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley is addressing this problem. The U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded Padilla Farm a Regional Food Systems Partnership grant to conduct a market and feasibility study to evaluate the lack of access to harvesting services in South Texas. Padilla Farm, in conjunction with its grant partner, H.O.P.E. for Small Farm Sustainability (<https://www.hopeforsts.org/>), is seeking input from farmers and ranchers through an anonymous online survey. Farmers and ranchers can also request that a survey be mailed to them.

In explaining why Padilla Farm launched the feasibility study, cattle farmer and Project Director Saul Padilla explained: "We want to encourage farmers and ranchers to raise more animals. But, they may hesitate if they have to transport their cattle or other farm animals hours away just to access USDA-inspected sites. Farmers and ranchers are proud to supply the regional food system but we could do more if we had more slaughter and processing services. Let's not forget how badly the COVID pandemic strained our food system. To create a more crisis-resistant food system, we have to address what local farmers and ranchers need to produce locally raised or grown food."

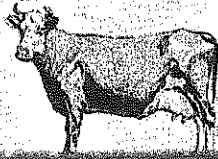
DO YOU FARM OR RANCH
IN ANY OF THESE 25 COUNTIES?

¿TIENE UNA GRANJA O RANCHO
EN ALGUNO DE ESTOS 25 CONDADOS?

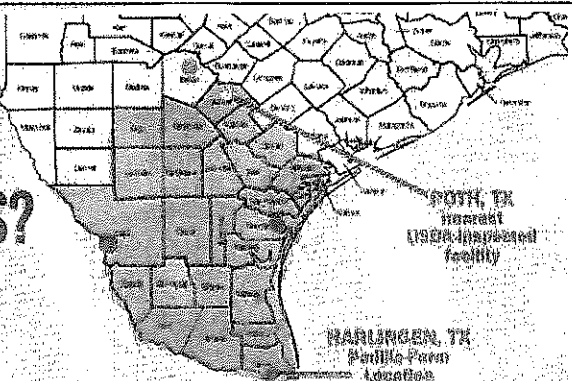
Do you raise farm animals for meat products?
¿Cria usted animales de granja para obtener productos cárnicos?

Do you use slaughter/processing services that are USDA or State-Inspected?
¿Utiliza servicios de sacrificio/procesamiento inspeccionados por el USDA o por el Estado?

Do you need to access these services?
¿Necesita acceder a estos servicios?



We are studying the needs of farmers and ranchers in South Texas. Please tell us your views. (See other side).
Estamos estudiando las necesidades de los agricultores y ganaderos del sur de Texas. Por favor, danos su opinion. (Ver otro lado)





Contact: Saul Padilla, Project Director
(956) 412-4916
yahwehs.farmgarden@gmail.com
19741 Morris Road
Harlingen, TX 78552

Salomon Torres, Project Consultant
(956) 341-5202
storres@stsoluciones.net

PRESS RELEASE

No Access to Government-Inspected Cattle Slaughter and Processing Services in South Texas

Harlingen, TX, June 12, 2023. – If you are a small farm or ranch in South Texas and you have cattle to harvest (i.e., slaughter) at a USDA or state-inspected facility, be ready to take your animals on a road trip to Poth, Texas (southeast of San Antonio) and get on a waiting list. For Padilla Farm in Harlingen that means a 450-mile round trip. A second round trip at a later date is required to pick up the processed meats. The transportation costs (and time lost) can add up.

Small farmers and ranchers in the Rio Grande Valley, the Coastal Bend, and other areas of South Texas south of San Antonio want to sell properly inspected meat products at farmers markets and supply them to grocery stores, food trucks, and restaurants. But, they cannot if the animals were not processed at a USDA or state-inspected facility.

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#####

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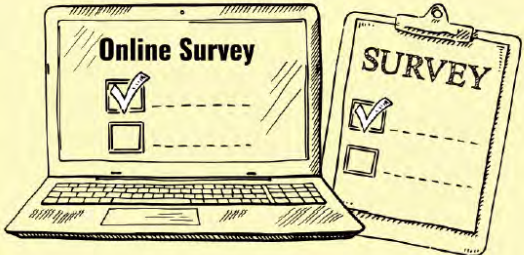

<https://yahwehfarm.com/farm-animal-processing>



SOUTH TEXAS LACKS FARM/RANCH ANIMAL SLAUGHTER/PROCESSING SITES

Farmer & Rancher Views are Needed to Propose Solutions

TAKE OUR SURVEY ONLINE





GRASS-FED LAMB	GRASS FED & FINISHED BEEF
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• Leg LAMB: \$13/lb	• Ground Beef: \$8/lb
• Lamb Shank: \$11/lb	• Round Steak: \$12/lb
• Heart, Kidney: \$5/lb	• Ribeye Steak: \$19.75/lb
CHICKEN	• Chuck Steak: \$13.75/lb
FED CERTIFIED ORGANIC	• Sirloin Steak: \$15.50/lb
• Chicken Stock: \$8	• NY Strip: \$14.00/lb
• Chicken Breast: \$7/lb	• Flank Steak: \$15.50/lb
• Chicken Neck: \$4/lb	• Beef Shank: \$3/lb
• Whole chicken: \$5/lb	• Brisket: \$10.45/lb
PASTURE RAISED PORK	• Short Ribs: \$13.75/lb
• Ground Pork: \$7/lb	• Rumb Roast: \$12.50/lb
• Pork Chop: \$6/lb	• Shoulder Roast: \$9.75/lb
• Ham Steak: \$6/lb	• Pike Peak Roast: \$7/lb
• Shoulder Steak: \$9.75/lb	
• Pork Bones: \$2.50/lb	
• Pork Liver: \$5/lb	
• Pork Lard: \$6	

Yahweh's All-Natural Farm & Garden Menu of Farm-Raised Meats.
Harlingen, Texas, Rio Grande Valley Region

