Summary Notes

Anne Fanatico

The Sustainable Poultry project held a public listening session at the CFSA Sustainable Agriculture Conferene 2021 (virtual). There were nine participants in addition to the two facilitators (Anne Fanatico and Kathleen Liang) and a conference host. Participants included a nonprofit worker, small-scale poultry farmers, and a volunteer/advocate.

We emphasized that we were discussing poultry production at all scales. Poultry meat will provide 1/3 of meat for 10 billion people by 2050 and 80% of humans will live in cities. Facilitators put together a 30-minute presentation called Sustainable Poultry Production and Social Justice that was available in advance. For the listening session, we gave a 5-minute summary for definitions. We asked the questions below and collected responses. Because it was held by Zoom, responses and discussion were both verbal and written.

1. WHAT ARE SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS IN LARGE-SCALE, INTENSIVE POULTRY PRODUCTION?

* Verbal (various): Disconnection from ecosystem; large-scale requires inputs (use more efficient transportation to transport inputs); are farmers under contract making a profit? Welfare of birds, workers; over-use of antibiotics; lack of connection by consumer; pollution
* Verbal (advocate): How is this project autonomous? There are multiple universities that work with large-scale industry. Response speaker: The project is definitely autonomous. If the project were not autonomous, then it would not be equitable and sustainable.
* Verbal (farmer): I am concerned about (company farm) in eastern NC…It is hard to be an aspiring grower in western NC and maintain quality. (The farmer raises pastured poultry and has AirBNB.)
* Written (non-profit): We at (nonprofit organization) are concerned about animal health/welfare, human health/resistance, worker health
* Written (farmer): Given that there's an assumption that the profit motivation trumps everything else at scale, the path to sustainability should include financial incentivization and opportunities for larger-scale operations to realize additional profits through efficiencies; new revenue streams, etc.

2. WHAT ARE SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS ABOUT SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE?

* Verbal (various): consumers rely on cheap meat, it is hard for small farmers to make a profit; more processing facilities are needed (for small scale producers).
* Written (nonprofit): We’ve heard from many small/medium scale farmers about the challenges with processing.
* Written (farmer): I'm a first-year small-scale poultry farmer. I pasture raise but finding assistance with infrastructure is difficult and I'm wanting more education on ways to utilize the waste in my soil health. Lastly, the consumer wants to pay less than we can sell and break even. However, starting up is more costly than once established.

3. WHAT WORK AND CHANGES ARE NEEDED FOR SUST POULTRY PRODUCTION IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

* Verbal (various): Consumer rely on cheap meat; it is hard for a small farmer to make a profit
* Written (advocate): I'm a volunteer advocate for the welfare of farm-raised animals, farmers, farmworkers. I'm a consumer who enjoys eating meat that has been sustainably raised by farmers I trust…Prevent further consolidation of meat companies.
* Written (farmer): Laws in some areas make raising chickens difficult if not impossible.
* Written (nonprofit): More support (funding, technical assistance) to facilitate this. And making this accessible to small/med producers and marginalized groups
* Written (farmer): With land cost rising finding property to pasture raise that's affordable is difficult.

4. WHAT ARE OPPORTUNITIES IN POULTRY MEAT PRODUCTION IN THE FUTURE?

* Verbal (various): Consumers want better quality meat; it is more expensive
* Written (nonprofit): Unrelated to the current question - but We’ve seen some that corporate purchasers have developed policies re: reduced antibiotic use - consumer demand has been building on this aspect.

5. HOW CAN WE REACH MORE STAKEHOLDERS?

* Verbal (various): NC Food System Advocacy Coalition; partner with hospitals
* Written (advocate): With the soy-based hemoglobin used to make non-meat taste like meat I appreciate the alternatives to non-intensive meat production. And I like the taste. But troubling that it villainizes all meat production when it's the CAFO's that are environmentally destructive…Especially learning that big corporate poultry is benefiting from staying big intensive and double-dipping into plant-based meat. They don't need more of consumer's money.
* Written nonprofit: There are some allied producer groups like APPPA (American Pastured Poultry Producers association) that might be helpful to engaged if you haven’t already

Written (farmer): Side note: I would like more info on natural alternative treatments.

We have summarized key points. We strive for high transparency, but have not identified participants by name or group. Discussions may not always be easy; we want them to feel risk-free.