

## **Harold and Pearl Dripps Department of Agricultural Sciences at McNeese State University**

### **Objectives:**

- Acquire a modern harvest and processing facility to be utilized by McNeese State University (MSU) and Sowela Technical Community College.
- Educate students and industry through workforce training in meat processing, packaging, preservation, marketing, and transportation.
- Provide workshops and seminars for the community on food safety, basic meat processing, and product preparation.
- Produce a branded product utilizing MSU beef, pork, and lamb born and raised on the MSU University farm.
- Partner with Sowela Technical Community College to establish a meat processing and culinary certificate program.
- Establish a retail outlet for branded products.
- Promote economic development in Southwest Louisiana.

The Lacassine animal harvesting/meat processing facility will provide training to individuals in all areas of meat processing, packaging, cutting, and preparation. With the current livestock resources in southwest Louisiana there is plenty of opportunity for meat processing, and food service industry. This facility will:

- Equip individuals with skills that will make them more employable and have a higher job entry level.
- Provide training for individuals that wish to produce a meat product for sale to the public. This will encourage entrepreneurship, support the start up of small business, and create local hiring opportunities to staff these facilities.
- Teach individuals important food safety laws for handling and processing meat products. Hazard analysis critical control point training (HACCP) will also be provided.
- Community training will also be provided by this facility. Basic meat cutting, packaging, and cooking will be taught during the evenings to provide safe and efficient methods for individuals to utilize in the home.

### **Description**

The facility consist of  $\pm 7,530$  square feet of harvest and processing space including equipment and  $\pm 21,876$  cubic feet of cold-storage and freezer space. The property is located in a rural area between Lake Charles, Louisiana ( $\pm 20$  miles west) and Jennings, Louisiana ( $\pm 15$  miles east). The land area contains  $\pm 16.0$  acres and has  $\pm 308$  front feet on the south side of the South Frontage Road that parallels Interstate Highway 10. The land is level, cleared and has a grass cover. The facility is located in an Agricultural/Industrial Park. Other businesses in the park are: Sugarcane mill, aggregate yard, and a cotton processing facility.

### **Justification**

The meat industry is the largest sector of agriculture and agriculture is the largest sector of the U.S. economy. The meat industry ranks first in total business receipts, earning approximately 28



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percent of total food industry receipts (Aberle et al., 2001). Currently, there is no training facility for college or high school students in the Nation for certification in meat processing and marketing.

There is a critical need for workers in the meat processing industry. The meat industry employs approximately 270,000 workers (AMI, 2005). Approximately 150,000 work in meat packing plants and 120,000 work in meat processing facilities (AMI, 2005). Students with meat industry training can pursue career opportunities as butchers or meat cutters in supermarkets and retail outlets. Additionally, trained students can work as quality control specialists, government inspectors, production specialists, research and development, and many other positions.

Southwest Louisiana is rich in livestock production. According to the 2008 Louisiana AG Summary published by the LSU AG Center, Jefferson Davis Parish produced livestock (cattle, calves, goats, and sheep) with a gross farm value of over \$6.5 million dollars. Neighboring parishes Calcasieu and Allen produced livestock (cattle, calves, hogs, sheep, and goats) that had a gross farm market value of over \$22.1 million dollars. Unfortunately a large portion of these animals travel out of the southwest part of the state and Louisiana to be harvested and processed. There is a critical shortage of meat packing and processing plants in the state. There are 30 reported meat processing and meat packing facilities in Louisiana. A large portion of these facilities are small and only provide custom harvest with limited processing. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics food processing workers held 705,000 jobs in 2006. Employment in all food processing occupations is projected to increase 8 percent during the 2006-16 decade. The need for red meat protein will continue to grow as the global population increases. Employment in the meat harvest and processing industry should continue to grow with this increase in population. Many of the workers in animal harvest/meat processing are trained on the job. These workers start at very low wages and often leave the field prior to advancement.

In addition to the harvest and processing industry all food service industry related employment continues to increase. With this increase comes the need for additional training, especially in the area of food safety. The United State Bureau of Labor and Statistics reported over 500,000 food services establishments in the United States in 2006. These establishments employed over 9 million wage workers. There are over 640 establishments in Calcasieu Parish that provide food service. These establishments employ over 15,000 people. Traditionally these workers have little to no prior training or experience in the food service industry. Most employees in the food service industry are first job employees who receive on the job training. The need for a standardized training program is urgent. This project will positively impact education and economic development in Southwest Louisiana.

Sincerely,

**Janet Woolman**

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