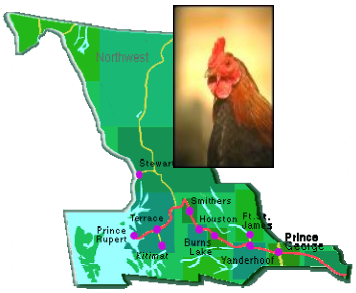
SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES:
POULTRY PROCESSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NORTHWEST



Submitted by:

Megan D'Arcy, B.Sc., R.P.Bio.
McElhanney Consulting Services Ltd.
3907–4th Avenue, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

Submitted to:
Jerry Botti, General Manager
Community Futures Development Corporation of Nadina
2430 Butler Ave., Unit A, P.O. Box 236
Houston, BC V0J 1Z0
Phone: (250) 845-2522 Fax: (250) 845-2528

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Abstract

New Meat Inspection Regulations (implemented under the Food Safety Act) are directly impacting small-lot livestock producers living in northwest British Columbia. Large distances between communities in the northwest have prompted local groups to develop initiatives that mitigate some of these impacts. At present, small lot poultry growers living along the Highway 16 corridor from Hazelton through to Vanderhoof have no way of legally slaughtering poultry for public sale. Although the current capacity for commercial poultry production has been basically eliminated by lack of access to an inspected processing facility, there is an increasing market demand for locally-grown poultry. The goal of this project was to conduct the necessary research (through a public survey and interviews) and to produce a feasibility study for the different poultry processing options practical for communities within this study area. The results of this research indicated that the past production numbers were sufficient to operate a small mobile processing unit (8,300 chickens and 852 turkeys). The trend indicated by the reported results is that the people interested in raising poultry for public sale would increase their production numbers if they had access to an inspected processing facility. A mobile processing facility appears to be the most feasible for the current demand, as most producers are spread out and the majority raise 25–200 birds. There are two proposed projects for building mobile processing units currently underway that would service all or part of the study area.

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1.0 Introduction

Changes in Meat Inspection Regulations under the Food Safety Act came into effect September 2007. These new regulations are directly impacting small-lot livestock producers living in northwest British Columbia. Large distances between communities in the northwest have prompted local groups to develop initiatives that mitigate some of these impacts. The Northwest Premium Meat Co-op is an example of an initiative led by producers in the Bulkley Valley to build a provincially inspected slaughter facility for cattle, sheep and swine. Although the new facility will help farmers adapt to new meat regulations and ensure local food security, it does not currently have the capacity to process poultry.

At present, small lot poultry growers living along the Highway 16 corridor from Hazelton through to Vanderhoof have no way of legally slaughtering chickens and turkeys for public sale. Although the summary statistics for poultry production were lacking for these communities, several small lot operations existed along this section of the Hwy 16 corridor prior to September 2007. This is evident (in part) by the number of chicks ordered from the Rochester and Miller Hatcheries for the Smithers/Telkwa area (2007), and the volume of feed (17% finisher, which is used to finish meat birds) sold through the Smithers Feed Store in 2006[1].

Although the current capacity for commercial poultry production has been basically eliminated by lack of access to an inspected processing facility, there is an increasing market demand for locally-grown poultry as expressed through people that buy from local producers, both at the farm-gate, and at the local farmers' markets. Results published in a study conducted by Connell *et al*. (2006)[2] documented the high priority that people in the northwest place on nutritional quality and local food production. In addition to this more formal type of information, it is clear from the attendance at public meetings, newspaper letters and articles, and petitions initiated that the small lot agricultural producers and local consumers are very concerned about the compromised access to local food sources.

This feasibility study was thus initiated to provide information and market research for poultry processing for the communities between Hazelton and Vanderhoof. It is intended that the results of this study will help maintain and enhance poultry processing opportunities in these communities.

1.1 Project Goal & Objectives

The goal of this project was to conduct the necessary research to produce a feasibility study for the different poultry processing options that would be practical for communities along the

[1] Preliminary research into poultry producer numbers indicated that the Smithers Feed Store brought in (and sold) 38 tonnes of finisher (17%) poultry feed in 2006. Also – 2007 hatchery information for the Bulkley Valley indicated that 6,500 chickens and turkeys were ordered, and that there is likely another 25% (1,625 birds) ordered directly. No information was collected for Hazelton, Houston, Burns Lake or Vanderhoof, although some people from Hazelton and Houston order their chicks through Smithers Feed and the Bulkley Valley Home Centre.

[2] Connell, D.J., Taggart, T., Hillman, K. and A. Humphrey. 2006. Economic and Community Impacts of Farmers' Markets in BC: Provincial Report. UNBC and the BC Association of Farmers' Markets.

northwest Hwy 16 corridor from Vanderhoof through to Hazelton. The work was designed to answer three key questions,

1. **What was the level of poultry production between Vanderhoof and Hazelton, and how can it be restored?**
2. **Who are the potential producers, and what kind of level of production would they strive to obtain?**
3. **What is the most economically feasible and practical method of processing poultry under the new meat regulations?**

The objectives of this study were as follows,

- to determine how best to survey small lot poultry production for the communities between Vanderhoof and Hazelton,
- to implement this survey, obtaining as much information as possible on the number of small lot producers, the poultry volume produced, the proportion of household income derived from this production, and the market price per pound for both chickens and turkeys, and
- to research information on the feasibility (e.g., economics, practicality) of either a mobile processing facility or a centrally located (fixed) processing facility.

2.0 Methods

At the onset of the project, a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was struck and the first meeting held on the 11th of February, 2008. The PAC was comprised of Leah Sheffield (Ministry of Agriculture and Lands), Shirley Hamblin (BC Food Processors Association), Jerry Botti and Kim Martinsen (both from CFDC of Nadina), Dan Boudreau (Nechako-Kitamaat Development Fund), Dan Boissevain (BV Credit Union), Rick Braam (Ministry of Economic Development) and Tracey Strong (BV Farmers' Market). Kim Martinsen left CFDC partway through the project; her position on the committee was filled by Pauline Goertzen.

A draft survey was presented at the PAC meeting for feedback and review. The finalised survey (included in Appendix I) was distributed through the Ministry of Agriculture mail-out in the week of February 18th. Surveys were also left at the following distribution centers,

Hazelton:	Tri-town Lumber and Feed
Smithers:	Smithers Feed
Telkwa:	Bulkley Valley Home Centre
Houston:	Bulkley Valley Home Centre
Burns Lake:	Chamber of Commerce
	Lakes Economic Development Association
	P & B Feeds
Vanderhoof:	Vanderhoof Co-op
	Glendale Agra

An electronic copy of the survey was sent to the Southside Economic Development Association (SEDA). This was followed up with a phone call to confirm the contact information, however no hard-copies were sent as the SEDA administrator indicated that no one was interested in completing the survey.

Surveys were also available through the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands if requested. An electronic copy of the survey, accompanied by a project summary was sent to Dennis MacKay's (MLA) office. In addition, the survey was distributed at the Vanderhoof and Prince George community information meetings organized by the Cariboo-Central Interior Poultry Producers Association (CCIPPA).

The survey deadline was originally decided to be March 15th, but due to distribution delays, the deadline was extended to March 25th. The surveys were received back at the McElhanney office throughout the month of March.

Background information regarding processing options was collected concurrently with the survey design and implementation. Information was collected through interviews with producers, as well as discussions with Shirley Hamblin from the BC Food Processors Association. In addition, information was presented by CCIPPA on a large mobile processing unit at the information meeting held in Vanderhoof in March (2008).

The results of the surveys were summarised and the analyses conducted in early April. A draft final report outlining survey results and the status of potential processing options was presented at a second PAC meeting on April 7, 2008. Comments and feedback from the PAC were incorporated into the final report, which was finalized and distributed to,

- the Project Advisory Committee members,
- the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako,
- Bulkley Valley 4-H Council,
- the Cariboo-Central Interior Poultry Producers Association, and
- survey respondents who had indicated that they were interested in receiving a copy.

Two public meetings were held in the middle of May (one in Smithers and one in Burns Lake) to present the survey results and answer stakeholder questions.

3.0 Results

3.1 Survey

As mentioned above, the survey was conducted during the month of March, 2008. Although surveys were made available in every community in the study area, not very many people accessed the survey through that means. The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands mail-out was very effective. Introducing the survey at meetings and through word of mouth were also valuable methods of delivery. In total, twenty-eight people returned completed surveys. One survey was returned with no traceability, but the breakdown of respondents by community for the remaining 27 is summarised in Table 1. Due to the reluctance shown by people to share their

information, it is anticipated that this number of respondents are only a proportion of the number of potential producers.

A total number of 12 people responded from the Smithers/Telkwa area (43%). Although the surveys returned from Hixon and Prince George are technically out of the study area, they were included in the results as both are still within reasonable travel distance to Vanderhoof (a potential location for a docking station).

Table 1. Breakdown of the number of respondents by community (N=28).

Location	Number of Respondents (N=28)	Percentage of total (%)
Blank	1	4
Burns Lake	2	7
Fort St. James	2	7
Hazelton	2	7
Hixon	1	4
Houston	2	7
Prince George	2	7
Smithers	5	18
Telkwa	7	25
Vanderhoof	4	14
Total	28	100

Out of the 28 respondents, 20 of them (71%) have previously raised poultry for public sale. The average proportion of farm income derived from raising poultry was 22% (N=17), but the range of responses was quite variable (min. 0.25%, max. 75%). Table 2 below shows the number of birds raised per year (N=18 for chickens; N=15 for turkeys).

Table 2. Survey results for past production throughout the study area (total number, average, minimum and maximum numbers).

	Chickens	Turkeys	Ducks	Geese
Total No. Birds per Year	**8,340**	**852**	**0**	**0**
Average No. Birds	**463**	**57**	**0**	**0**
Min. No. Birds per Year	**25**	**10**	**0**	**0**
Max No. Birds per Year	**3000**	**200**	**0**	**0**

The perceived market value for poultry was generally reported as a per pound price. When it was reported differently, the value per pound was estimated based on the information provided by the respondent. The average response was $2.94 per pound (market value) for both chickens and turkey. Most people charge the same price for both chicken and turkey; two people reported charging slightly less per pound for turkey. The range in perceived value was between $2.15 and $4.00 per pound.

3.1.1 Processing

Of the 28 respondents, 24 reported that they would use an inspected facility if it were available (86%). With respect to processing, people were asked to report how much they thought was a reasonable price to pay for processing for both broilers and turkeys (the primary target markets for a potential processor). On average, people reported that they felt $2.45 was reasonable for chicken (N=20, min. $0.75, max. $4.00). The average processing cost reported for turkeys was $4.82 (N= 15, min. $2.00, max. $8.00).

In addition to cost, people were asked how far they would travel to a processing facility. The majority of respondents (46%) reported that they would be willing to transport their birds 25 to 100 km. Results for all of the respondents are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Survey response indicating the distance people are willing to travel to a poultry processor.

Distance	Response (N=28)	Proportion (%)
No response	**3**	**11**
Up to 25 km	**8**	**29**
25 km to 100 km	**13**	**46**
100 km to 200 km	**4**	**14**
Over 200 km	**0**	**0**

The survey also asked people to estimate the numbers of different types of poultry they would produce if they could access an inspected facility (Figure 1). No one said they would grow 25 or less chickens for public sale. The majority of people (46%) reported that they would grow between 25 and 200 chickens. Three people reported that they would potentially produce over one thousand chickens. Extrapolating from these results (i.e., taking the average for each range and multiplying by the number of respondents in each category), the potential production for the entire survey area would be 10,012 chickens (N=24). Again, these numbers are only based on information from 28 people, so they may be quite conservative.

Similar to chickens, the majority of respondents (N=19) reported that they would likely produce between 25 and 200 turkeys (50%). Two people reported that they would produce between 200 and 500 turkeys. No one reported that they would produce more than 500 turkeys (the maximum number of turkeys that can be produced by a direct vendor is 300 birds). Again extrapolating from the data, there would potentially be 2,312 turkeys produced within the study area. This number may be an over-estimate, however, as most people would likely produce in the lower end of the survey range rather than the average.

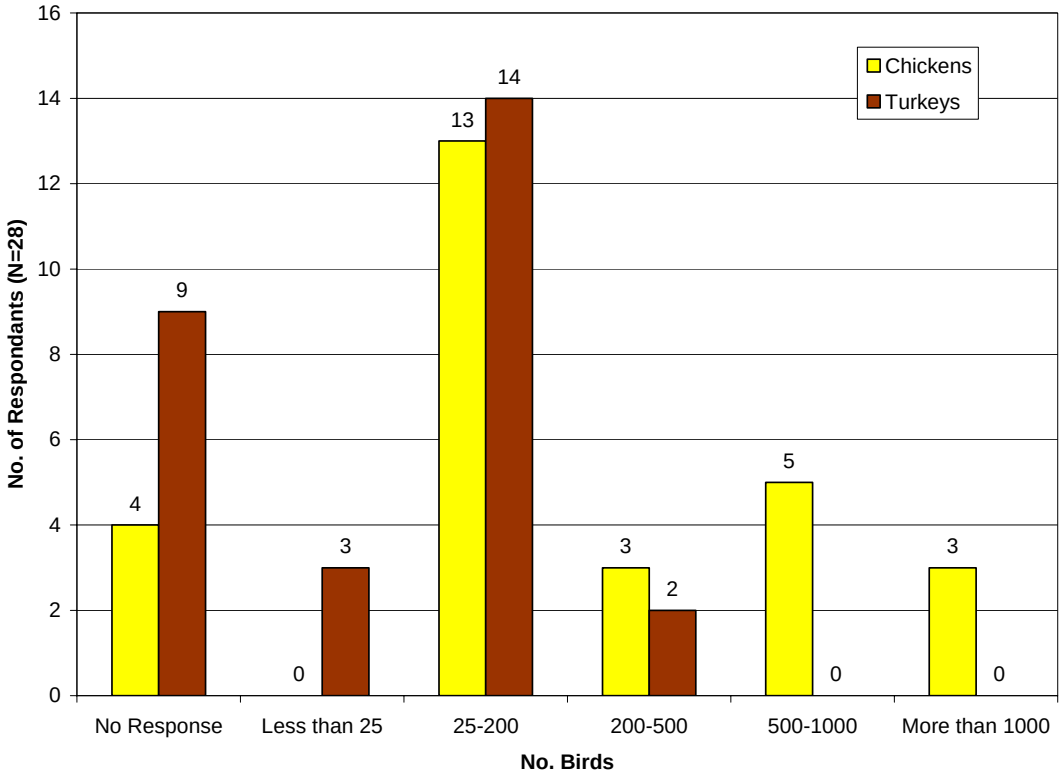

Figure 1. Potential chicken and turkey production as reported by survey respondents.

A few people reported that they would be interested in growing other types of poultry (Table 4). 'Other' referred to pheasants in all cases.

Table 4. Survey results for the potential production of other types of poultry.

		Ducks	Geese	Other
No. of Respondents	less than 25 birds	2	1	1
	25–200 birds	1	1	0
	200–500 birds	0	0	1

3.1.2 Marketing Board Permits

Poultry is a supply and demand regulated product in BC. Two questions in the survey were designed to give people information about the small lot (chicken) and/or direct vendor (turkey) permit applications that have to be submitted to the BC Chicken Marketing Board (BCCMB) and the BC Turkey Marketing Board (BCTMB).

According to the BC Chicken Marketing Board (BCCMB), small lot producers can grow up to 3,000 kilograms (6,600 pounds) of chicken every year. The BCCMB has dictated that each bird produced represents 1.929 kilograms (4.24 pounds) of live weight (calculates to approximately 1,555 chickens, less if producing roasters).

Small lot growers producing chicken need to apply to the BC Chicken Marketing Board for a permit. This permit is $20/year (no GST), and has to be renewed annually. The Board requires that producers submit placement and slaughter data. Currently there is no mandatory on-farm inspection.

Similarly, commercial turkey sales are regulated by the BC Turkey Marketing Board. Producers are considered to be direct vendors if they sell between 50 and 300 turkeys. To sell turkeys, producers must get a permit that enables them to sell at the farm gate, at a farmer's market, through an independent butcher, or through an independent restaurant (no wholesalers, brokers, retail grocery or commercial food service chains). The permit is $25/year, plus 0.32 per poult (both are subject to GST). At this point, on farm inspections are not required.

The survey questions with respect to the two marketing boards asked if people would be comfortable applying for these permits, and if not, what would hold them back. The results are outlined below in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of survey responses with respect to applying for permits from the BC Chicken and BC Turkey Marketing Boards.

	BCCMB		BCTMB	
	No. Respondents (N=28)	Proportion (%)	No. Respondents (N=28)	Proportion (%)
No Answer	1	4	3	11
No	7	26	8	29
Yes	20	70	17	61

There were several comments back on this section of the survey. Most were regarding unnecessary bureaucracy and interference, extra costs, and extra work going through the red-tape. There were some concerns expressed about the future with respect to increasing costs and regulation.

At present, ducks, geese and pheasants are not currently governed by marketing boards or any similar type of regulatory agencies.

3.1.3 Poultry Organization in the Northwest

Just over half (64%) of the people who returned surveys expressed an interest in being part of a poultry group. Similarly, over half of the respondents requested to see the results of the survey. Historically, poultry producers in the northwest have been very independent. A poultry association for this part of the province would give producers a larger voice with respect to regulations, as well as providing a venue for producers to share information. One possibility is that the group could form as a chapter of the Cariboo-Central Interior Poultry Producers Association, a recently formed, non-profit organization originating from Quesnel.

On the last page of the survey, there was a section for people to write general comments. These comments have been summarized in Appendix II.

3.2 Processing Opportunities

Generally, there are two options for processing inspected poultry – a fixed processing plant or a mobile processing unit. The nature of poultry production in the northwest is that most of the producers are spread apart, and most raise numbers under the current permitted levels. In the northwest, mobile processing is likely the most practical alternative to farm-gate slaughter, as one unit can travel between communities. It would then be possible to reduce poultry transport distances for the cost of building one processing unit (as opposed to building fixed processing plants in two or three communities). Although on-farm slaughter would likely still be preferred by most producers, the mobile unit is more economically and logistically feasible if it works from a central docking station (in part due to the inspection requirements for docking stations under the new regulations).

Currently, in the Smithers area there is a producer who has developed plans for a small-scale mobile poultry processor (100–300 birds per day). At this stage, the plans are still being approved by the BC Centre for Disease Control. Funding applications have been submitted to build the processor once it is approved. In the interim, it is likely that the producer will be issued a Class C license (by the BC Centre for Disease Control) to fulfill local processing requirements.

As well as this initiative, the Cariboo-Central Interior Poultry Producers Association (CCIPPA) has developed plans for a much larger mobile processing unit. This processor would have the capacity to do both poultry and rabbits. The intention is to conduct a pilot project involving the construction of a large scale mobile processor (up to around 1,000 chickens per day), which would then travel to a docking station in each of the target communities from 100 Mile House north to Prince George and west to Vanderhoof. The cost of this mobile processor is significant (Appendix III) – again, funding applications have been submitted to assist with financing. Community meetings were held at the end of March (2008) for this project in order to gauge the response of producers in each target community.

With the larger processing facility, producers would have to organise themselves and their production schedules around the availability of the processor, and the schedule of producers in neighbouring communities. The advantage of the smaller processing unit being built in Smithers is that it would be operated by one or two people, who would then travel with the unit. In contrast, the larger processing unit would only be accompanied by the truck driver – processing operators would have to be assigned within each community with a docking station.

An advantage of the larger unit, however, is that the increased processing capacity would enable people in northern and central interior BC to potentially apply for quota, either through the new entrants program, and/or through buying quota.

As briefly mentioned earlier, both the large and small mobile processing units require inspected docking stations to operate. Docking stations require a source of potable water, and an acceptable disposable system for the grey water. As usually one or both of these requirements is difficult to meet outside municipal boundaries, it is easier and more cost effective to build a docking station using a municipal water supply and waste disposal system. Capital cost estimates for docking stations are between $10,000 to $25,000 (S. Hamblin, BC Food

Processors, pers. comm.; C. Piltz, CCIPPA, pers. comm.). Some discussion has taken place regarding the use or expansion of existing docking stations (i.e., at the North West Premium Meat Cooperative abattoir site). The issue with poultry processing is the large volume of water required. Most existing abattoirs have a maximum capacity for grey water disposal.

Both of these proposed mobile processing units would likely be utilised and thus supported by producers in the northwest. Currently, the smaller processor would have to meet the processing requirements for communities along Highway 16, as the larger unit is only proposed to go west to Vanderhoof. There is a possibility of the larger unit eventually travelling west if production levels warrant it, however.

4.0 Discussion

A primary objective of this project was to document numbers of poultry producers within the study area. During the course of implementing the survey, it was apparent that several people feel concerned about sharing their information at this point in time. It was clearly stated in the survey that people could remain anonymous if they chose to do so; however the level of suspicion around government organizations and regulation is currently high enough that people still did not feel comfortable filling out the survey.

Three questions were proposed at the onset of the project.

1. **What was the level of poultry production between Vanderhoof and Hazelton, and how can it be restored?**

The level of past poultry production (farm gate sales) reported through returned surveys for the entire study area was 8,300 chickens and 852 turkeys. This level could be restored and potentially increased if producers could obtain access to an inspected processing facility. These numbers, in fact, are likely quite conservative as the number of respondents may only be a proportion of the number of people that have actually grown poultry in the study area.

When the numbers are collected and analysed for the feasibility of a small mobile unit, at least 8,000 birds have to be processed through the unit in one year to make it a viable business opportunity (S. Hamblin, BC Food Processors, pers. comm.). Past production is thus sufficient to justify the construction of a small scale mobile processor within the study area.

2. **Who are the potential producers, and what kind of level of production would they strive to obtain?**

It appears from the results that although the survey respondents are spread out throughout the study area, a large number of them are within the Smithers/Telkwa area. Throughout the study area (Vanderhoof to Hazelton), however, 86% of respondents were interested and willing to use a mobile processor. A very small proportion of these people indicated in their comments that they would only utilise an inspected processor under certain conditions (i.e., distance, freezing and/or cryovac capacity, etc.). Although the number of respondents from Hazelton, Houston and Burns Lake were quite low, it is likely that these communities would also utilise an inspected facility if it was available.

With access to an inspected facility, most people have indicated that they would attempt to increase their level of poultry production. It should be noted, however, that the permitting levels dictated by the two marketing boards may limit some producers. To comply with the permitting process regulated by the BC Chicken and BC Turkey Marketing Boards, the allowable levels of poultry production for a small lot grower/direct vendor is only around 1000 chickens and up to 300 turkeys. The survey results indicated in Figure 1 however indicate that generally people are interested in producing greater volumes of poultry if a mobile processor were available.

An inspected facility would be utilised by people who are new to poultry production as well. During the course of this project, both past and potential producers have stated that they do not enjoy the slaughtering aspect of poultry production. The mobile processor would thus encourage new producers who did not want to kill their own birds.

3. **What is the most economically feasible and practical method of processing poultry under the new meat regulations?**

As mentioned in the results, a mobile inspected processing unit is preferable to a fixed facility as most of the producers are spread out within the study area. As transportation of poultry is not desirable over large distances, docking stations would have to be established in each of the major communities for the mobile processing unit to be fully utilized.

4.1 Transportation of Poultry

Under the new meat regulations, people producing and selling birds will have to resolve the issue of transporting poultry from the farm to the processing site. Most people were willing to travel up to 200 km, however some people had concerns about transporting their birds that far. Some survey participants clearly didn't want to transport them more than 25 km. At present, the smaller mobile processor has only budgeted for one docking station, which would likely be in Smithers. Although the larger processor will be travelling to Vanderhoof, this is not scheduled to happen until 2010 (C. Piltz, CCIPPA, pers. comm.). In the meantime, people outside of the Smithers/Telkwa area will have to transport their birds for processing unless funding can be procured to establish additional docking stations.

On-farm processing (unless it was a central location and could become the docking station for that community) is complicated due to logistics. Producers would therefore need to develop a method of transporting their poultry to the docking station for the mobile processor. Although producers aren't currently regulated with respect to poultry transportation containers, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency[3] has a preference for the plastic crates. These crates are easy to clean and disinfect, but are quite expensive – around $75.00 per crate. Alternatively, it is possible to build wooden and/or a combination of wood and wire crates in order to transport poultry. Some considerations when transporting poultry are proper ventilation, size, ease of cleaning and disinfection, and loading/stacking capability. It is important that the birds don't have too much room as if they can hurt themselves if they become stressed. Ideally they would

[3] The inspectors for the different meat processing facilities are hired through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as part of an agreement with the province of BC.

be transported with a minimum amount of stress, as the end result would be fewer utility grade birds and better quality meat.

4.2 Opportunities & Challenges

Raising any kind of poultry, particularly chickens and turkeys, comes with both rewards and challenges. The opportunities come with the ability of poultry producers to generate on-farm income and create a more stable local food economy. Challenges include the navigation of the regulatory structure, and the development of business management strategies that would be necessary to ensure the production is viable. Figure 2 is a visual representation of the different steps in the poultry production process under the new Meat Inspection Regulations.

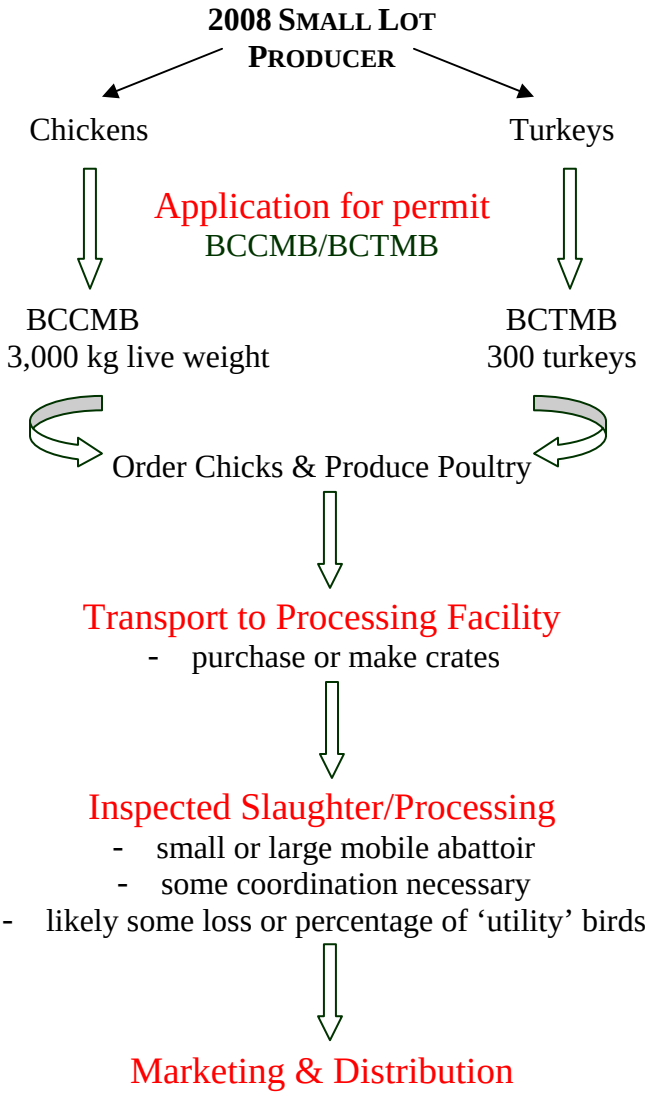

Figure 2. The stages or steps of the production process for raising and selling chickens or turkeys for public sale under the current Meat Inspection Regulations.

5.0 Recommendations

Communities with the majority of survey responses (i.e., Smithers, Telkwa and Vanderhoof) should collaborate with the BC Food Processors Association to establish docking stations in order take full advantage of the two proposed processing units. A docking station in Vanderhoof could be used by both the small scale mobile processor proposed for Smithers, and by the larger unit proposed by the CCIPPA.

A second recommendation is that someone takes the initiative to organise a poultry group for the northwest. There was sufficient interest expressed by the survey respondents, and although most people are quite spread out, a poultry group could create a network that would greatly facilitate the organization of the producers. This organization is instrumental to the success of both proposed mobile processing units, and would thus be of benefit to all of the people concerned with poultry production in the northwest.

Appendix I. Poultry Survey

SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES: POULTRY PROCESSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NORTHWEST

Poultry Processing Survey

Information collected in this survey will be compiled and summarised in a feasibility report, and used by people who are interested in pursuing the business opportunity of processing poultry. The intent is for this information to create an opportunity for the small farmer to have a feasible alternative that is in compliance with the new meat regulations.

The purpose of this survey is to try and determine poultry production capacity **(meat birds only) between Hazelton and Vanderhoof**. This project is in response to the fact that as of September 30, 2007 when the new meat regulations came into effect, poultry growers have no way of processing chickens or turkeys for public sale. **All surveys have to be completed and sent back by ~~March 15, 2008~~ extended to March 25th, 2008.**

1. Prior to September 2007, have you ever raised poultry (chickens, turkeys, ducks, etc.) for public sale (including neighbours, etc.)? **(Please note that it is fine if you would prefer to remain anonymous.)**

2. If so, approximately how many birds would you have raised for sale each year?

   Chickens _____
   Turkeys _____
   Ducks _____
   Geese _____
   Other _____

3. Approximately what proportion of your total farm income was made from poultry sales? That is, if you have cows, hay, and poultry, what percentage of your **total sales** came from the poultry?

4. What do you perceive as the average market value for poultry (either per bird or per pound/kilogram)? Please specify the type of poultry.

5. If there were an inspected processing facility available to you, would you consider producing poultry for public sale?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

Funding Contributors:
- Ministry of Economic Development
- Nechako-Kitamaat Development Fund
- Bulkley Valley Credit Union Economic Development Committee
- Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
- Bulkley Valley Farmers' Market Association (Smithers)
- Bulkley Valley 4-H Council

6. How much do you think you could pay for processing per bird?

   Broilers _____ Turkeys _____

7. If you had to travel, how far would you go to a processing facility?

   Up to 25 km ☐

   25 km to 100 km ☐

   100 km to 200 km ☐

   Over 200 km ☐

8. Approximately how many birds of each kind would you expect to grow annually?

	Number of Birds				
Type of Poultry	**Less than 25**	**25–200**	**200–500**	**500–1000**	**More than 1000**
Chickens (Broilers only)					
Turkeys					
Ducks					
Geese					
Other					

9. Poultry is a supply and demand regulated product in BC. Small lot producers can grow up to 3,000 kilograms (6,600 pounds) of chicken every year. The BC Chicken Marketing Board has dictated that each bird produced represents 1.929 kilograms of live weight (calculates to 1,555 chickens).

   Small lot growers producing chicken would need to apply to the BC Chicken Marketing Board for a permit. This permit is $20/year (no GST), and it has to be renewed annually. The Board requires that you submit placement (date that chicks arrive on your farm) and slaughter data. Currently there is no mandatory on-farm inspection. Would you be willing to do this, and are you comfortable with this process? If not, what would hold you back? (Please note that these permits do not exempt you from the meat inspection regulations).

   Yes ☐ No ☐

   What would hold you back?

10. Similarly, commercial turkey sales are regulated by the BC Turkey Marketing Board. You are considered a direct vendor (small lot) grower if you sell between 50 and 300 turkeys. To

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- Bulkley Valley 4-H Council

sell your turkeys, you must get a permit that then enables you to sell at the farm gate, at a farmer's market, through an independent butcher, or through an independent restaurant (no wholesalers, brokers, retail grocery or commercial food service chains). The permit is $25/year, plus 0.32 per poult (both are subject to GST). Would you be comfortable and willing to apply for this permit, and if not, what would be holding you back? (At this point, on farm inspections are not required.)

Yes ☐ No ☐

What would hold you back?

11. Are you interested in participating in a Poultry Producers group for the Northwest?

    Yes ☐ No ☐

12. Additional comments. This is your opportunity to add information or ask questions that may be directed to the appropriate resource. If you have questions, please include your contact information.

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

Thank you very much for participating in this survey.
Please make sure that you send it in by mail, fax or hand delivery by MARCH 25th.

It is the intent of this project to use this information to further agriculture, poultry production in particular, in the Northwest Region. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions,

Megan D'Arcy
McElhanney Consulting Services Ltd.
Box 787, 3907–4th Avenue, Smithers BC V0J 2N0
Phone: (250) 847-4040 ext. 26
Fax: (250) 847-4160
Email: mdarcy@mcelhanney.com

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Email _____

If you would like to see the results of this study please check the box below, and make sure you include your contact info.

Yes, I would like to receive the results of this study ☐

Please Note: You can still remain anonymous as far as the reported results are concerned.

Funding Contributors:
- Ministry of Economic Development
- Nechako-Kitamaat Development Fund
- Bulkley Valley Credit Union Economic Development Committee
- Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
- Bulkley Valley Farmers' Market Association (Smithers)
- Bulkley Valley 4-H Council

Appendix II. Comments

Facility must include capacity to cryovac (shrink wrap) and quick freeze. Anything less makes marketing difficult/impossible.

For 2008 – we have decided not to raise any poultry due to slaughter regulations.

I have no problem with the government meat inspection regulations. However, I do not see the necessity for government or marketing boards getting involved with production as this will in all likelihood lead to producer costs rising.

I'd like to see an inspected travelling facility – similar to what you see in Saskatchewan.

I'd really like to explore group buying of heritage birds like heritage breed turkeys for example. Also, I'd like to know if there are any heritage breed clubs or organisations in our area. And I'd like to go see those heritage turkeys on Vancouver Island in company of a knowledgeable Ag person, perhaps on a kind of field trip.

If a mobile facility were available we would get back into the business as there is a huge demand for free range birds. We have been waiting for 3 ½ years for the promised Premium Meat Co-op and it is still not open so we are not too hopeful.

In this area, poultry production is a "hope we break even" situation, primarily because of freight costs for feed – add the new carbon tax to that and it will be extremely difficult. However, the land in much of our area is very suitable for poultry farming (free range!). On another note, I would sure like to see figures supporting the new regulations on farm-gate sales and processing (if any truly exist).

My upbringing on mix farm and birds were done every year and no one has ever been sick or other—every year since the mid-70's. I took over after my mom and dad died and no one has been ill – I could raise a couple of 100 birds; don't have enough time/pasture land.

Quotas should be split up and moved from the south to the north. Logging and cattle are not looking too good right now…

Re: #7 [distance to processing], processing plants need to be close re: the price of fuel, does slaughter include cutting and wrapping and freezing.
Re: #9, is there an allowance for poultry mortality?
Regarding #9 [permit application], why can chickens not be sold at farm-gate?

This process pushes out the small farmer by making the end product too expensive for most people ($8.50/hr per person).

We had talked about this for sometime. Maybe even look into buying quota (depending on price).

We need a minimum of 6,000 birds to make a mobile feasible.

We would like to increase our poultry production, so we would like to see a portable processing facility.

What about ethnic groups that wish to slaughter [for] themselves. Processing plants need to be close to large cities i.e. Prince George.

What is the real point of these extra taxes and controls? Are these regulations for meat control for the good of the people, or for the good of the marketing boards and now for the good of the government coffers?

Who gets permit money?

Would require processor or way to freeze birds prior to pick-up.

Appendix III. Cost estimates for Mobile Processing Units[4]

		Cost Range	
Mobile Poultry Unit	**Category**	**Low**	**High**
Mobile Unit & Conversion	Capital Cost	20,000	70,000
MPU – Equipment	Equipment	15,000	55,000
Totals		**35,000**	**125,000**
Docking Station[5]			
Site Plan			7,500
Pad/Plumbing/Power	Capital Cost		10,000
Septic/Sewer	Capital Cost		5,000
Building	Capital Cost		10,000
Totals		**10,000**	**32,500**
Cold Storage			
Building	Capital Cost		150,000
Pad/Plumbing/Power	Capital Cost		17,000
Hydro hookup	Capital Cost		6,500
Site Preparation	Capital Cost		50,000
Process Equipment	Capital Cost		15,000
Coolers/Freezers	Capital Cost		35,000
Totals		**n/a**	**273,500**

Estimated processing fees (these are volume based and thus will likely be adjusted accordingly).

	Small Mobile	**Large Mobile**
Chickens	$ 4.00	$ 3.00
Turkeys	$ 6.00	$ 6.00
Geese/Ducks	n/a	$ 5.50
Rabbits	n/a	$ 4.00

The smaller mobile anticipates processing around 5,000 birds (total gross income of just under $20,000). The larger mobile unit anticipates processing 18,000 chickens, 3,500 turkeys, 4,250 rabbits and under 1000 ducks/geese.

Both processors will be essentially operated as community services (on a cost plus basis to cover maintenance, wages, etc.).

[4] Numbers are estimates based on current business plans for two proposed mobile processing facilities.
[5] These costs could be significantly reduced if using the septic and potable water systems from an existing abattoir site.