

Buying & Selling Local Meat Products *Sonoma County Meat Buying Club*

Creating a sustainable local market for Range Livestock

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University of California Cooperative Extension

Priority to explore niche markets for local livestock producers

1. 40% of the agricultural land in Sonoma County is used for livestock production
2. Many acres of the county's agricultural landscape are in danger of being lost to non-agricultural uses
3. Increased interest in buying local, organic, grass fed, "niche"
4. UCCE interest in sustainable, local agricultural enterprises

Led to the development of a pilot project to strengthen local food economy in Sonoma County

Local Rangelands



Sonoma County Rangelands

Generational ranch families

Grass Fed Livestock:

Beef, Sheep, Pigs, Goats

Other products:

Chickens, Ducks

Looking for methods to market locally raised products

University of California Cooperative Extension
Sonoma County
Locally Grown and Processed Meat

- Provide County residents access to local meats, raised on Sonoma County family farms
- Follow environmental and humane practices
- Local meat at an *"affordable price"*

End Goal: Enhance local market opportunities for the county's livestock producers

Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
Locally Grown and Processed Meat

Marketing Opportunities:

- Increase income streams to keep ranching operations viable
- Educate general public about livestock production, range management, etc
- Pair with groups like Slow Foods, CAFF, etc to increase local awareness
- Ride the wave of buying LOCAL

How to Market
Locally Raised Livestock ?



- Whole Beef
 - Quarters / Halves
 - Restaurants
 - Farmers Markets
 - Internet sales
- What to do with what's left over?***

Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
A Box a Month

Sonoma County Meat Buy Club
"A Box a Month"

- How it works:
 - Developed a three tier level of membership
 - Small Order: (7 lbs) 5 lbs of beef, 2 lbs of pork
 - \$65 per month, (approximately \$8.00 per pound)
 - Medium Order: (15 lbs) 8 lbs of beef, 4 lbs of pork, 3 lbs of lamb
 - \$115 per month, (approximately \$7.50 per pound)
 - Large Order: (25 lbs) 15 lbs of beef, 7 lbs of pork, 3 lbs of lamb
 - \$180 per month, (approximately \$7.00 per pound)
 - Asked for a 3 month commitment from members
 - Frozen Product

Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
Box a Month – Locally Grown and Processed Meat

- Started as a survey to find out the demand for such an entity
- Developed first Meat Community Supported Agricultural (CSAs)
- Paired with Vegetable CSAs ~ Tierra Vegetables, Laguna Farms
 - Weekly/monthly boxes of local seasonal vegetables

Sonoma County Meat Buying Club

Box a Month – Locally Grown and Processed Meat

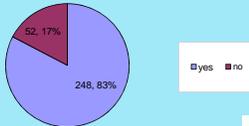
- Created a survey asking consumers about their perceived access to local, sustainably produced agricultural products
- Willingness to purchase local, frozen, etc
- Survey was available on the University of California Cooperative Extension website
- Partnered with quasi government agency and sent the survey ~ received a response from 300 individuals



Sonoma County Meat Buying Club Survey Results

- 83% of consumers surveyed stated they did make an effort to purchase local agricultural products

Are you currently making an effort to purchase locally produced agriculture products?



yes no



Sonoma County Meat Buy Club Survey Results

Consumers not buying local because: #1 - Convenience and availability (31%)

Reasons for Not Buying Locally Produced Agriculture Products



Convenience and Availability
Price
Lack of Awareness, Not Clearly Advertised in Stores
Haven't Thought About it
Other Reasons



Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
"A Box a Month"

GOALS: Meat Buying Club, 18 month period:

- Gain a sustainable list of consumer members
- Provide marketing opportunities for many livestock producers in the club
- Expand marketing areas and sales volume
- Promote the club through the "Range to Plate" event that highlights our county's diversity of livestock products

Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
"A Box a Month"

GOALS: Meat Buying Club, 18 month period:

- Create capacity in a county-based, food-system-oriented non-profit organization to take over club management at the end of the project period
- Document club development and operation, encourage replication in other communities and counties
- Develop marketing publications on "how to" develop local niche markets

Sonoma County Meat Buy Club
"A Box a Month"

Signing Up Producers

- Producers signed affidavit that livestock received no hormones, no growth promotants, never – ever
- UC Davis Humane Livestock Handling Practices
- Within a 25 mile radius of Sonoma County
- Quality meat ~ good range management practices, good genetics, generational family farms, community involvement, etc.

TELL A STORY

Sonoma County Meat Buy Club
"A Box a Month"

Signing Up Producers

- Producers responsible for delivery to USDA processing plants
- Payment received not as "usually"
- Producers willing to meet with the public

Sonoma County Meat Buy Club
"A Box a Month"

Signing Up Consumers

- Developed a website and order form that were sent out to those individuals that filled out the survey
- Mass PR push through local papers
- Radio spots on Food programs
- TV appearances
- FOOD events – food pairings at local restaurants, featuring chef and producers
- 3-month commitment to the Club

Sonoma County Meat Buying Club

- Public Relations outreach to increase market reach
 - Newspaper articles:
 - Sonoma West Times
 - Healdsburg Tribune
 - Windsor Times
 - The Bohemian
 - Word of Mouth

Russian River Times
UCCE Newsletter



Twenty Five Mile Radius of Sonoma County



Sonoma County Meat Buying Club "A Box a Month"

- Partnered with a USDA inspected cut and wrap facility
- USDA funding for coordinator
- Developed label
- Away we went.....



Sonoma County Meat Buying Club "A Box a Month"

- Mix of meat included:
 - Beef: ground, stew, steaks (cube, chuck, rib, filet, t-bone), and roasts (London broil, tri-tip, chuck roast)
 - Pork: boneless and bone-in pork chops, bacon, and roast
 - Lamb: leg steaks, spring lamb leg roast, frenched rack, loin chops, rib chops
- Recorded meats members received to ensure proper rotation of choice meats



New Products Added

- Meat Goats 
- Chickens, eggs 
- Ducks 
- By-products – liver, fat, bones, pet food, etc 
- Sauces  

Sonoma County Meat Buying Club "A Box a Month"

- Featured a different local chef each month that creates recipes purposely for the meat cuts featured in the boxes
- Each member receives a copy of the laminated recipe cards each month
- Newsletter detailing the stories about the livestock producers



Sonoma County Meat Buying Club Newsletter

- Newsletter includes a description of the producers and their farming operation
- Details the practices that the farmers followed in raising the livestock for the meat buying club
- Includes information about the chef of the month




“Meat” the Producers



Dr. Bill Barboni

Petaluma, CA
Grass Fed Beef producer
1400 pounds + live weight,
grades Choice & Select
Producers paid on Hot
Carcass Weight (HCW)
\$2.50/lb HCW >60% DP
\$2.00/lb HCW < 60% DP
*Kill charges paid by Meat Buying
Club (\$95)*

“Meat” the Producers



Rick Olufs

Windsor, CA
“Corn Finished “ beef
producer
Grows own corn silage,
hay, pasture, local
byproducts
Finishes beef 45 days
on corn

Payments to Producers

Lambs – \$3.50 / lb live weight

Pork - \$ 1.00/ lb live weight
Kill charges paid by Meat Buying Club (\$30)
Load Mile (35 cents / mile)

Goats - \$150 - 175 / head
Kill charges paid by Meat Buying Club (\$30)

First Meat Delivery



February 2008 – Lessons Learned

- USDA shut down the first delivery
- Non USDA approved packaging
- “Refrigerated” truck
- Delivery site(s)



Sonoma County Meat Buying Club *Survived the First Month*

Profitability of the first shipment:
Without the cost of administration:
cost of goods sold: \$3,858.24
net income: \$4,860
Profit: \$1,001.76



Sonoma County Meat Buying Club

March Membership:

- Increase to 113 members, consisting of:
 - 90 Small members
 - 35 Medium members
 - 5 Large Members

Determined meat buying club needed 150 members to self sustain itself



Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
"A Box a Month"



Problems at the beginning
Each shipment brought new issues

USDA

- Meat CSAs new to USDA
 - USDA label approval
 - USDA safe handling and bug stickers for meat

Consumers

- Needed to maintain the contentment of members
- Recognition of meat cuts by members
- Location of pick-up locations

Producers

- Pork Supply

Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
Packaging, Labeling, Handling



Consumer:
Super market product

Consist product

USDA:
Establishment bug
Safe handling
Product label
Weight
Product contamination

**Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
Consumer Dissatisfaction**

After 9 months - 75 people had dropped club membership
Surveyed former members (65% return rate)

Top 3 Issues

- 1. Product inconsistency**
 - > Changed butchers, Cryovac cuts, super market cuts
- 2. Price = "Affordable Price"**
 - > Developing cost study, business plan, actual cost of food, buying local, etc
- 3. Delivery sites**
 - > Increased delivery sites – 4 (over 4 days)

**Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
A Box a Month**

Continuing Educational Opportunities

- Range to Plate, promotional event for the Meat Buying Club - event benefits culinary and animal science students
- Increase markets access for producers to sell and consumers to purchase local meat at Farmers Markets, retail stores, restaurants, etc.
- Develop sustainable food systems, promoting locally produced agriculture commodities!



**Sonoma County Meat Buying Club
A Box a Month**

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Visit our website:
<http://ucanr.org/SoCoMBC>
 Order form and recipes are available on the website
