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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 24, 2006

New Guide Clarifies Questions about Direct Marketing of Poultry

Across the state and nation some poultry growers are marketing their products directly to retail outlets, restaurants and individual consumers, while other growers are considering how they might start such enterprises.

"Many poultry producers are planning to add value to their enterprises by incorporating harvesting and processing facilities on-site and developing formal marketing arrangements with retailers, restaurants and other target markets," said Rob Holland, a University of Tennessee Extension specialist with the Center for Profitable Agriculture.

Holland suggests that growers considering direct marketing of their poultry carefully understand all the regulatory and inspection requirements and the possible exemptions for small-scale operators. He says growers can now consult a publication issued by the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) that clarifies the Poultry Products Inspection Act.

"This guide helps growers determine which poultry harvesting and processing operations require bird-by-bird inspection by USDA and which are eligible for exemption under the federal Poultry Products Inspection Act," Holland said.

According to the new guide, enterprises that harvest or process poultry for use as human food are required to do so under bird-by-bird inspection by USDA unless specific exemption criteria are met. Exemption criteria as outlined in the guide are based on several conditions including adherence to sanitary procedures and size of operation. The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the final authority on the requirements for exemptions.

"Exempt status for bird-by-bird inspection does not exempt facilities from regulatory oversight or other periodic inspections to ensure clean and safe food for human consumption," says Megan Bruch, UT Extension marketing specialist with the Center for Profitable Agriculture. "Facilities must have proper licenses and adhere to sanitary standards, periodic inspections and product labeling requirements."

Bruch suggests Tennessee poultry harvesting and processing facility operators review the guide and then contact the regional USDA FSIS office located in Jackson, Mississippi (601-965-4312),

to make sure they are in compliance with applicable regulations.

A complete copy of the guide may be downloaded from the USDA Web site at:
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/Poultry_Slaughter_Exemption_0605.pdf

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