



Support SB 1341/ HB 3083 Help Small Farmers & Increase Access to Locally Raised Poultry



Current Texas law allows small farmers to process poultry on their own farms. But while the statute simply requires that the farmers register with DSHS and submit a sanitary operating procedures (SOP) plan, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has used the procedural requirement to bootstrap extensive, expensive facility requirements. The agency's unwritten policy is that it will not approve any farmers' SOP plan unless that farmer complies with all of the federal regulations for a full-size commercial plant.

DSHS's requirements are out of step with the majority of the country. In 45 states, farmers can process up to 1,000 birds/year on their farm with no or with minimal requirements (such as registration). Forty-one of these states also allow farmers to process between 1,000 and 20,000 birds per year with some level of substantive requirements (which vary from state to state, although only a few are as stringent as DSHS's requirements). In contrast, not only does DSHS impose expensive facility requirements on even the smallest producer, but the agency then caps the total production at 10,000 birds per year, half of what the other states allow.

In financial terms, building and equipping such a facility is a \$40,000 to \$50,000 investment. This makes on-farm processing too expensive and difficult for most farmers.

DSHS's burdensome requirements pose a major barrier for local meat production, hurting both farmers and consumers. There are only 3 USDA-inspected processors in the entire state who will process birds for small-scale producers. That means that, in much of the state, farmers have no access to processing facilities, and consumers are left without a local source for poultry.

SB 1341/ HB 3083 would create a micro-processor option for those processing 1,000 birds or fewer, requiring registration with DSHS but no substantive regulations. For producers who build a facility meeting DSHS's requirements, the cap would be raised to 20,000 birds/year. This bill would bring Texas in line with the majority of other states.

Note that all on-farm processors would remain subject to the federal law for inspection and enforcement actions if their products are adulterated or misbranded. The federal law also requires recordkeeping and labeling,¹ which these farmers would be required to comply with.

SB 1341/ HB 3083 is supported by the Texas Local Food and Farm Coalition, Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association, Farm & Ranch Freedom Alliance, the Sustainable Food Center, Food Policy Council of San Antonio, GROW North Texas, Grow Local South Texas, and Waller County Farmers & Ranchers Cooperative.

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¹ https://www.farmtoconsumer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/USDA-FSIS-Guide-Poultry_Slaughter_Exemption_0406.pdf (see page 9)