

U.S. grass-fed beef producer to build certified-humane processing facility White Oaks to expand its markets, keep cattle off 18-wheelers

by Sustainable Food News
February 20, 2007



Will Harris never liked raising cattle for the 'industrial complex'

Georgia's largest grass-fed beef producer said Tuesday it will break ground in the next few months on a new certified-humane processing facility "to significantly expand" distribution of its beef products.

Will Harris is the fifth-generation cattleman raising 650 head of cattle on his family's ranch, White Oak Pastures, which is also the brand name of his company's 100 percent, certified humane, natural ground beef product.

"Truly, the demand of food raised properly is expanding and meat is no exception, but it may be the best example of it," Harris told **Sustainable Food News**. "The difficulty is that there are a lot of us growers that really want to raise food properly, but it's been very, very difficult to get food to the consumers."

[Watch Video: Will Harris talks about raising grass-fed cattle at White Oak Pastures](#)

At 200 miles from the nearest major metro area of Atlanta, Harris wrestled with how to best get his product in front of consumers.

White Oak Pastures recently received a \$461,865 state loan to help fund the plant's construction, which is to be built on his family's 140-year-old ranch.

The new facility will allow Harris to increase production capacity five fold to 15 head per week, but reduce the expense of transporting his cows to a processing facility 100 miles away. White Oak Pastures currently transports its cattle to a processing facility 100 miles away from the family farm in Bluffton, Ga.



“ My cattle will never be loaded into a truck their whole life,” he said. “I want to raise cattle and sell them to people who appreciate the way I do it.”

White Oak Pastures is also Georgia’s only beef producer to meet Certified Humane’s animal treatment standards, which require producers to raise beef without antibiotics or growth hormones and in a humane environment that allows them to “engage in their natural behaviors.”

The multi-species plant (cattle, hogs, sheep, goats) will initially be outfitted to process only cattle, Harris.

The company’s White Oak Pastures Grassfed Ground Beef is currently sold at over 200 Publix supermarket stores throughout the southeast U.S. for \$6.99 a pound.

“ Our beef tastes better because our animals get to spend their lives as they were meant to, roaming freely and grazing on grass,” said Harris. “Most of the beef people buy in this country is from cattle raised on high carbohydrate grains and other unnatural feedstuffs. But cows aren’t made to eat corn, they’re made to eat grass. It’s better for them, it’s better for the environment, and I would argue it’s better for us, too.”