



### Western SARE

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[www.westernsare.org](http://www.westernsare.org)

### Western SARE Grant Categories

- Research & Education
- Professional Development
- Farmer/Rancher
- Professional + Producer
- Graduate Student

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## BUILDING POULTRY MARKETS

### Situation

In northeast Washington, five producers of pastured poultry comprised the NEWA Poultry Producer Cooperative. Through trial and error, the five had learned the ins and outs of a successful cooperative.

Co-op members were dedicated to using sustainable and cost-efficient methods to turn out a uniform, quality product. The chickens had access to grass, which cut down on feed bills and added to the quality of the meat.

Having achieved some success, the producers saw an opportunity to expand.

Their goal with the Western SARE grant was to share the information and enthusiasm the NEWA Cooperative had generated to encourage other farms to get into pastured poultry and to help the entire cooperative succeed through



STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURE'S  
**INFRASTRUCTURE**

ADDING VALUE, BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS, INCREASING PROFITS



Lazy Lightning Ranch produces Cornish Cross poultry.

### Farmer/Rancher Grant

**Title:** Strategies for Building Regional Markets for Pastured Poultry

**Project Number:** FW06-020

**Principal Investigator:**

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**Amount Funded:** \$11,360

group collaboration and marketing.

### Objectives

- Expand the current pastured poultry and egg markets in the local area
- Create a "start-up" marketing platform for new producers

### Actions

The project team focused on promoting sales through four venues:

1. Establish a pastured poultry booth at the local farmers market
2. Provide chickens for local retail sale
3. Work with restaurants to secure a market for the chicken
4. Create a product-specific CSA program featuring chicken

The group decided to sell their chickens under a self-

created label called "Farmer's Pride Poultry." A logo was created and a minimum price was set at \$2.49 a pound. It was estimated that three farmers had 1,000 birds for sale through the project.

### Results

With moderate to excellent success, the project team succeeded in getting chickens into three target venues: farmers markets, retail stores and product-specific community supported agriculture (CSAs). A fourth venue, restaurants, was less successful.

### Farmers Markets

Members were allowed to sell at the Colville Farmers Market using cooperative equipment that included table, tablecloth, cash box, banner and brochures. The co-op



*The goal of Western SARE is to foster sustainability through grants that enable cutting-edge research and education to open windows of sustainability across the West.*

*SARE's **vision** is an enduring American agriculture of the highest quality. This agriculture is profitable, protects the nation's land and water and is a force for a rewarding way of life for farmers and ranchers whose quality products and operations sustain their communities and society.*

*SARE's **mission** is to advance — to the whole of American agriculture — innovations that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.*

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## BUILDING POULTRY MARKETS

purchased the equipment, and the Stevens County health fees were split among producers.

Sales were moderate in 2006, with 6-15 chickens sold each Wednesday June to October. Patrons valued the chickens, and sales were projected to increase in 2007.

### Retail Sales

At the retail level, with the help of Paul Dye of Paul's Pastured Poultry, the group secured a regular spot at Meyers Falls Market natural food store in Kettle Falls. Meyers Falls paid for the birds up front each month and provided signs and labels to help make the Farmer's Pride Poultry brand more prominent.

### Community Supported Agriculture

The project partnered with a local produce farm, the Acheson family and its Front Porch produce and antique orchards, as well as local organic orchards. Along with traditional fruits and vegetables, the CSA offered 20 weeks of a dozen eggs a week, a loaf of whole wheat bread and a whole chicken, delivered to Front Porch for centralized pick-up.

The Stevens County CSA had 15 subscribers in 2006 – six "chicken at \$800 for the season and nine "veggie" at \$600 – a high number in a rural area that had not previously experienced a CSA.

### Restaurants

The cooperative was unable to persuade restaurateurs that it could provide both volume and low prices. Chefs said that if a restaurant is going to provide a limited amount in a mid price range, the restaurant must be able to promote the menu item with a "farmer story" rather



Lazy Lightning Ranch uses chicken tractors, like those above, to pasture its Cornish Cross poultry.

than a generic label like Farmer's Pride Poultry.

Labor was one of the biggest challenges for the project partners. The low volume of chickens precluded hiring outside labor, and the on-farm help was not sufficient.

Another challenge was the requirement to process the birds in a Washington State Department of Agriculture licensed facility. The co-op was able to use a mobile processing unit developed by Washington State University Extension. But the community-owned equipment was not always available when needed.

### **Potential Benefits**

While the logistical and labor challenges led to the

cooperative being disbanded, and only one of the operations survives, the project made significant impacts that continue.

"The ongoing positive result of the project was that it did open the door to other producers (a new family is selling chickens at the local farmers market), and it helped launch the CSA program, which is still running," said project coordinator Jamie Henneman.

"Getting out there and telling our story made a difference in our area and helped to boost the overall 'local food' culture."