



# Summary of Testimonials

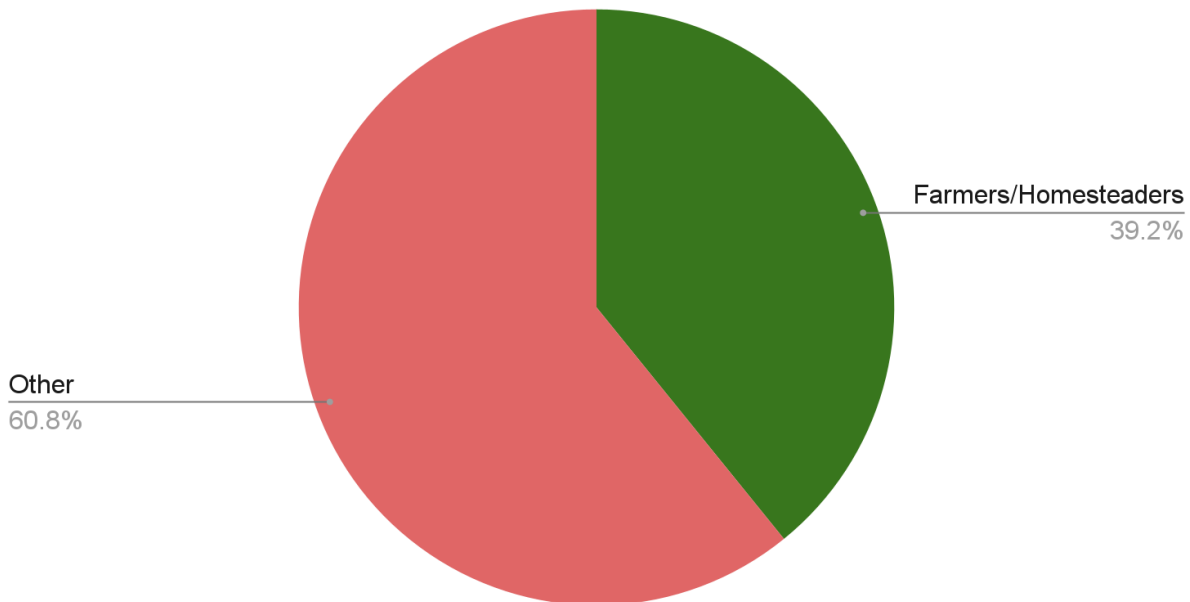
For the repeal of the registration and report requirements for On-Farm Slaughter

Rural Vermont, 3/24/22

In early March 2022, Rural Vermont wrote and distributed a sign-on letter advocating for the repeal of the registration and reporting requirements for On-Farm Slaughter (OFS) to provide protection for OFS practitioners from new VAAF/FSIS restrictions. The sign-on letter included the opportunity for signers to describe how the new restrictions personally affect them – below is a small selection of the nearly 100 written testimonials provided. The new restrictions require:

1. every livestock owner, who purchased the animal from a farmer for its slaughter on the farm, to be at least present during the act of slaughter if not engaging also in the slaughter themselves
2. farmers who organize OFS would are not allowed to hire itinerant slaughterers on behalf of the owners of the livestock they raise
3. owners, and not farmers, need to be the ones to transport the carcass off the farm and to the butcher

Signatories to the RV sign-on letter 3/24:



Farmer testimonials:

"As a new and growing livestock farm, we would like to be able to confidently offer On-Farm Slaughter as an option to consumers. The logistical challenges and marketing/consumer education needed with the current changes essentially mean that On-Farm Slaughter will be very difficult to incorporate as a viable business option, leaving us to struggle to find slaughter dates, stress our animals with transportation, and lose the flexibility and control that On-Farm Slaughter allows over the process."

*(anonymous)*

"We exclusively use on-farm slaughter to process our animals. We would have to stop producing meat for our customers." *(anonymous)*

"We raise and process many animals on-farm. This will greatly impact our ability to remain in business."

*(anonymous)*

"The one thing I hope someone can make them see is that a lot of little farms lose money on paper or make a pittance, but seem to hang on. I think the difference between hanging on and not is the off the books unpaid labor, barter, general neighbor/family/community support. I think if they make any part of On-Farm Slaughter illegal they don't know the harm it may cause."

*Geordie Lynd, Northwind Farm in Cabot*

"[...] We are young and struggling farmers and having more barriers to cross to have access to food is just another way for us...to have less control of our food system."

*Philip Prevosto, Tell A Tale Farm in Rutland*

Our pork has always been humanely slaughtered on-farm, and transported cleanly by our butcher back to his facility for custom cutting [...]. Our customers have no desire to be a part of the slaughter process and are not equipped to transport whole hogs from the farm to a butcher shop for cutting/wrapping. [...] For this reason we have decided, after 17 years producing pasture raised organically fed pork, to cease operation in this department until a more reasonable solution is found. Our customers are devastated. They either cannot get pork from any of the other operations we've referred them to, or are choosing not to because they value the stress free option of On-Farm Slaughter for the animals [...]."

*(anonymous)*

"Any restriction imposed on On-Farm Slaughter makes high-quality lamb production on a small scale unsustainable and will decrease the quality of the lamb we provide through selling lamb shares to our customers. Ironically this will have effects that are directly counter to Vermont's stated farm preservation and "Vermont brand" policies."

*Shincracker Icelandic Sheep Farm, Curt C. Peterson in Hartland*

"As a farmer directly helping feed our community it is very challenging to secure USDA slaughter dates if not impossible in many cases. This year we were only able to find 80% of the slaughter spots we need and will be required to truck animals 2 hours to the slaughterhouse. We also have many community members who seek out meat from On-Farm Slaughtered animals for both animal welfare and affordability reasons and we would like to be able to support their needs and wishes. From direct experience, I can say

confidently that On-Farm Slaughter can provide the highest animal welfare value and food safety. I also don't believe legislation should be inhibiting or obstructing consumer food choices." *(anonymous)*

"I currently sell 1/2 and whole beef animals to individuals as well as for home use. Depending on availability, I use both a slaughterhouse or on farm slaughter. I can never get enough space at the one slaughter facility which I use, so having this flexibility means I can better serve my customers and can use several different cutting facilities that don't offer slaughter."

*Kilborn Hill Farm, Thomas Moseley, Derby*

"We have a small sheep farm and currently use On-Farm Slaughter to provide meat for our family and shareholders. Local slaughterhouses are full. We can't get on their list. The animals that we slaughter are far less stressed because there is no transport. Animals that are not used to transport get highly stressed when transported and then they are stressed in the slaughterhouse facility. Our animals are not stressed ever in this way. If we can't do On-Farm Slaughter we would stop raising sheep."

*(anonymous)*

"On-Farm Slaughter is an important element to running a sustainable, viable, and diversified farm, as well as being an option that consumers seek out and support. Limiting the options for farmers would be in direct contradiction of what both farmers AND consumers want. It is simply irresponsible and frankly absurd to place further limitations on the farms of Vermont."

*Hillside Farm, Hannah Pearce, Albany*

"[...] On-Farm Slaughter has opened the faucet just a bit to allow more pathways to meat production. By allowing pre-sold custom (not for sale) slaughter to take place away from the slaughterhouses, there is more room for retail cutting under inspection. We have master itinerant slaughterers who prepare these carcasses for custom butchers to cut. Take them away and you'll put the final stopper in the bottleneck of meat production." *(anonymous)*

"I have a small diversified farm and raise five pigs per year for customers. I use a wonderful custom butcher who slaughters on a farm. This would put me out of the pig raising business. My pigs improve the soil (they are rotationally pastured), I feed local people, and I don't have concentrated manure - all issues on large factory farms and USDA facilities." *(anonymous)*

"We raise a small flock of lambs for annual meat production. We do so in humane ways and want to retain our right to provide food to our family, friends, and neighbors without statutory principles that don't apply to our scale. Independent producers have all the ability to maintain best slaughtering practices, clean and with care. This is a benefit compared to larger kill floors which are under pressure to work quickly to maximize profit. Our process involves the selection of lambs for raising by purchasing from neighboring farms, pasture raising grass fed lamb, utilizing an itinerant slaughterer for the most humane processing, and utilizing a local butcher for custom cuts. This process directly supports local labor in the growing process and this is all before the act of eating. Why should we hinder this methodology?"

*Windfall Farmstead, Nicholas Laskovski, Roxbury*

"On-farm slaughter was really the only choice for my medium-sized sheep farm for the sale of lambs. The bottleneck of getting a date set with a slaughterhouse, at least a year in advance if not longer, meant I had to take the chance the lambs would be of the best weight by that date. In addition, the lambs lost weight having to be held at the slaughterhouse in small confined pens without food or even water sometimes

until slaughter. Lastly, the stress of having to load animals onto trailers for a long trip - sometimes 3 to 4 hours - could be completely eliminated by simply setting up staggered slaughter dates on the farm."

*Osprey Hill Farm, Kimberly Hagen, North Middlesex*

#### Custom Butcher testimonial:

"I am trained as a butcher and have worked exclusively in small shops that specialize in ethical butchery (animal care, environmental, etc.). I have seen firsthand the care that small farmers and individual homesteaders take with their animals, and I am also intimately familiar with the cost and burden of having to transport livestock to a slaughter facility, especially for small farmers. Vermont has an incredible history of reverence with food, through hunting, foraging, and farming. On-Farm Slaughter is an important part of that care and reverence (not to mention that it increases the quality of the meat we consume - less travel means a calmer animal, which means less adrenaline and cortisol release which in turn results in higher quality meat). With a looming climate crisis, it is important that Vermont continues to lead the way in cherishing practices that divest from reliance on national agro-business and instead invest in local care and practices." *(anonymous)*

#### Customers of On-Farm Slaughter:

"I buy all our meat from small farms that I know personally, and am concerned about unnecessary regulatory overreach. Every step should be taken to ease restrictions on people's right to fresh and wholesome food straight from the farm. Small farmers know best. Please listen to them. Let owners be owners, but let farmers be farmers. We have the privilege in our state to have access to fresh farm food. Please let's use common sense and do what's right. Our food system is already in crisis mode; let's not add to the crisis with unnecessary regulations that make no sense on the ground here in Vermont.

*Susanne Abetti, White River Junction*

"It is my right to access food that I trust for me and my family - including meat that is raised and humanely slaughtered by the Vermont farmers and itinerant slaughterers who work to bring humanely raised, safe, clean, traceable, delicious food to their customers like me. In my opinion, these onerous and punitive barriers that wreak undue havoc on this supply chain, imposed yet unsubstantiated by the VAAFM, are forms of intimidation that are unjust and purposeful in design, in order to cause direct harm to the small family farmers of Vermont."

Alice Berlow, Putney

"As a consumer, access to my meat supply will be devastated if these restrictions are allowed."

Douglas Reaves, Fairfax

"The meat we eat comes from a neighbor who has been [practicing] on-farm slaughter for many years. I have worked alongside him and he is as professional, efficient and caring as you can get. [...] It would be another devastating blow to our VT culture by these out of touch out of town politicians who are completely disconnected with the values of Vermonters."

*Ted Benoit, Wheelock*