



**NC GROWING TOGETHER**

Connecting Local Foods  
to Mainstream Markets



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## Working with Local Niche Meat in Retail Settings

# Bringing on New Local Niche Meat Producers

### A Visual Guide and Checklist

While purchasing produce directly from farmers has become typical practice for some grocers, purchasing meat or other products remains something of an unknown.

To support the processes by which grocery store managers can come to know and become comfortable purchasing niche meat directly from farmers, NC Choices and the NCGT project created this visual guide and checklist, which can be adapted by retail grocers in North Carolina and other states for their own use.

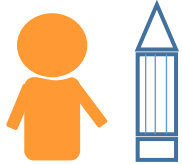
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[www.ncgrowingtogether.org](http://www.ncgrowingtogether.org), [www.ncchoices.com](http://www.ncchoices.com)



# To Niche Meat Producers: How to Become a Vendor at Your Local Happy-Go-Lucky Market\*

**STEP 1:** The producer obtains the *NC Niche Meat Readiness Checklist* (attached).



Producer

**STEP 2:** The producer meets the grocery store manager or meat manager for an initial vetting.



Producer



Store Manager

**STEP 3:** If the store manager thinks the producer has potential, then the manager will talk to the Meat Category Manager, who has final approval on vendor set-up.



Producer



Store Manager



Store Manager



Category Manager

## Potential NC Niche Meat Readiness Checklist:

Upon completion of this checklist, the producer is ready to speak with a Happy-Go-Lucky store manager.

- Do you have consistent product *quality*?** Consistent product quality is KEY to ensuring a successful product.
- Do you have consistent *volume*?** Consistent volume is typically important, but some grocery stores have the flexibility to “sell out” of special items and/or only carry product in select stores, so your local Happy-Go-Lucky store may be willing to adapt to changes in volume. Just be sure to discuss this openly with the store manager.
- Do you have a business model that can work with wholesale pricing?** In other words, if you have been selling direct to consumers, for example at a farmers market, the purchase price from the store to you will likely be less than what you have received.
- Do you have consistent cold storage and transportation throughout the supply chain?** Many state departments of agriculture (including North Carolina’s) require that poultry product be stored and transported properly to prevent product adulteration due to temperature abuse. Meat should be transported and handled with consistent cooling methods with maintained temperatures of between 33-40° F in order to maintain a product temperature of 40 degrees or below.
- Do you use a state or federal processing facility to slaughter and process your product?** Meat and poultry products processed in a state plant can only be sold within the state. Products processed in federal plants may be sold within NC and out of state. At Happy-Go-Lucky we can only sell products processed in federal plants.
- Do you have a retail ready product including professional packaging?** Rollstock packaging is preferred but not required in all cases.

- Do you have a copy of supporting documentation to back up any label claim made on your product, including information on brochures, websites, and point of sale material?** Make sure all marketing materials list only approved label claims (see the NCGT/NC Choices *Niche Meat Production, Voluntary Labeling Claims, and the Approval Process*, [ncgrowingtogether.org](http://ncgrowingtogether.org)).
- Do you carry product liability insurance?** Happy-Go-Lucky stores require a Comprehensive General Liability Insurance of at least \$1 million.
- Do you have an established brand and customer base that will attract customers to your product in a retail setting?** Products that are delivered as direct-store-delivery (DSD) items should have their own marketing materials including social media to have the best chance of sales in our stores.
- Can you price your product at a competitive rate once the grocer includes their margins?** Your grocer can explain the margin to you. In the grocery trade, margins for meat are typically 25% or more.
- You will be responsible for marketing your product in the store locations. Do you have the ability to sample your product on a regular basis and provide marketing materials to tell your story?** As a new vendor, customers may not know of your farm or brand. Sampling, staff support, and face time with customers is strongly suggested.
- Produce that does not sell within a certain amount of days may be price-reduced for quick sale. Are you comfortable with this?** This will vary depending on the grocer.
- Do you have other buyer outlets?** Most grocers cannot promise full utilization from your entire carcass. Potential producers should consider other products and marketing outlets when developing a full carcass utilization plan.

- The grocer may require changes be made to your product labels and marketing materials.** Do you have the ability to work with your processor and make those changes in an efficient manner?
- The grocer may require producers to obtain an independent audit to verify food safety standards.** Your grocer can share this information with you.
- Are you able to deliver product to select stores?** Are you able to arrange suitable transport?
- Do you have a good relationship with your processor?** When dealing with packaging, labeling, volume, and product changes, good communication and cooperation with your processor is key.