

Hog Farmers Deliver Pork Directly To Consumers

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (AP) — Mike and Kate Yankauskas are beating the hog crisis by selling and delivering their pork directly to the people who eat it.

Their direct marketing approach, and the right-to-your-door delivery service, brings more money into a family farm that a couple of years ago was in real danger — more money, at least, than they'd get if they sold the hogs at market along with everyone else.

"When hogs dropped to eight cents, we just thought, 'What else could we do?'" Mike Yankauskas said. "I could have gotten an outside job. Kate could have too. We just didn't want to."

So the Groverton couple took two hogs to a local meat packer and had them packaged for sale. They told friends, neighbors, and relatives about the business.

Word spread fast, and now Kate and her sons deliver bacon, hams and other cuts from 24 hogs a month to customers in a refurbished mail truck fitted with a freezer and painted with the company name — The Pork Shop.

Delivering pork is not just a timely idea for the Yankauskas family.

Farmers are grappling with record-low hog prices and a two-year market free fall that is forcing

some pork producers to quit the business. Prices for all varieties of crops and livestock are floundering.

Mike Yankauskas, his wife and three sons, one of whom is now a student at Purdue University, run The Pork Shop themselves — and it's keeping the small 2,500-head hog farm afloat.

The Yankauskas are finding it rewarding too.

Compliments for the meat, usually delivered within days of being cut, abound. People buy it, like it and buy again. Then they tell others about it.

"We can handpick the best 10 percent of our hogs based on the kind of cut we know we're going to need, whereas the grocery store kind of has to take what it gets," Yankauskas said.

The Pork Shop is beating the local grocers' price too, with the added bonus of the family who raised the hogs delivering the meat to your front door.

Greg Gunthorp of LaGrange is another farmer who's selling his pork products himself, but in different ways. He and his wife, Lei, are raising their hogs out of doors and without the aid of any chemicals.

The all-natural pigs are drawing a lot of interest and generating a lot of new revenue for the farm, especially from high-end restaurants across the Midwest.

And they're marketing their meat with a concession-stand style catering service at events in their area — getting paid to serve crowds. That's become a free advertising tool because diners learn they can buy the meat from

the Gunthorps.

They too have learned to go around the resellers. They could sell a hog at market for \$80. But by selling to consumers and retailers directly, they could get \$400 a hog.

"That's still the biggest obstacle

for a lot of farmers is the marketing," Greg Gunthorp said. "The production part has gotten easy, but the sales process is, well, those are skills that are never really taught."

Elliotburg Educator Awarded National Service Citation

ORLANDO, Fla. — Samuel R. Wagner, Elliotburg, Pa., received the NAAE Outstanding Service Citation on Dec. 11 at a special awards program here at the National Association of Agricultural

Educators (NAAE) annual conference.

As an agriculture teacher and FFA adviser for 35 years, Sam Wagner has kept the West Perry agricultural education program successful in spite of the changing needs of the agricultural community. Originally focused on production agriculture, the program moved to cover agricultural science and consumption of agricultural products to meet the needs of students.

Leadership is also emphasized, as the FFA remains one of the most active organizations in the school. Parliamentary procedure is used highly in the organization and other clubs in the school district use the FFA chapter as a resource regarding the conduct of meetings.

Wagner was challenged with economic constraints during 1980-1983 as the summer agricultural education program was discontinued. This reduction of summer activities was detrimental to the agricultural education program, but after a change in administration, an initiative to rebuild the program began.

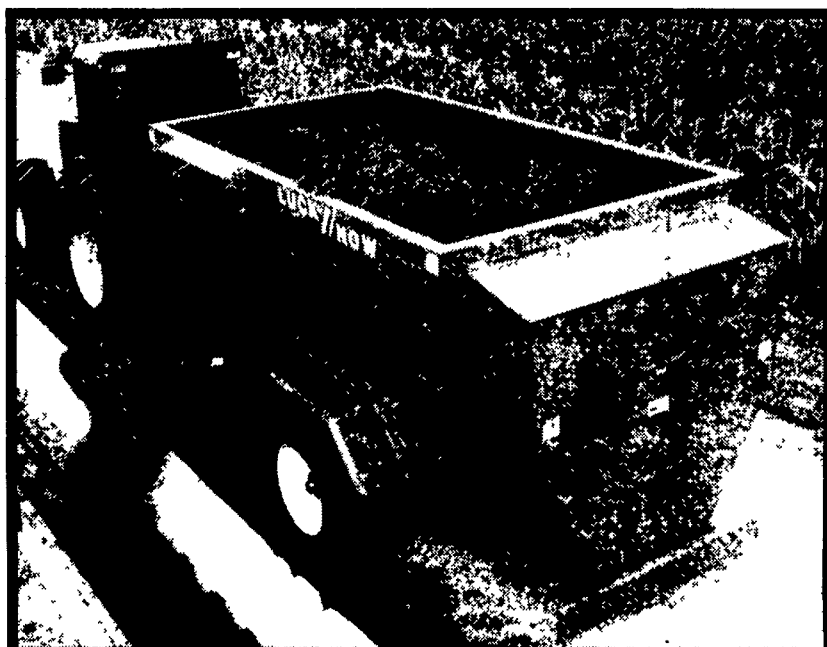
While teaching at West Perry, his students have won numerous awards, including bronze and silver National Dairy Foods teams.

Wagner's 35 years of service is distinguished with leadership positions in professional, civic, community, and agricultural associations. His many awards include the Honorary Pennsylvania FFA Degree, Honorary American FFA Degree, Pennsylvania agricultural teachers association Honorary Life Membership Award, and the NAAE 35 Years of Service Award.

The NAAE presents the Outstanding Service Citation to individuals who have contributed to the advancement of agricultural education on a regional or national level.

"Agricultural education needs the support of capable people who know the value of quality education that prepares students for the world of work," said NAAE President Tom Kremer. "This award recognizes individuals who provide resources to make agricultural education a most relevant and meaningful educational experience."

NAAE is the professional association for agricultural educators.



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