

Meet local chicken demand with CFO's Artisanal Chicken® program



"The nice thing about the program is that it keeps the numbers up—they bring larger orders," said Velma Armstrong, who, along with her husband, owns Sprucedale Quality Meats.

"It's easier to process one order of 200 chickens than having 10 farmers bringing us 20 each," she added.

The provincially-licensed abattoir is located 20 minutes north of Huntsville, and has a small retail outlet on location and an online market.

Armstrong said that there are four to six regular artisanal farmer customers who come to her abattoir to have their chickens processed. The farmers then sell the birds to local restaurant and retail outlets.

The program is the first-of-its-kind in Canada. It was introduced by CFO in 2015 to encourage small-scale farmers to supply craft chicken for processing which is intended for local farmers' markets, retail outlets and restaurants. It's a way for farmers and processors to explore specialized markets, grow their businesses and support their local communities.

With consumer demand rising for chicken that's grown locally and sustainably, independent processors and butchers can find both customers and suppliers through the Chicken Farmers of Ontario's (CFO) Artisanal Chicken® program.

"There's a certain segment of society that wants a premium product from a known source," said Dale Scheffer, who owns Scheffer Poultry Processing, located about 15 kilometres west of Harriston. "The artisanal farmers are able to capture that market."

Scheffer added that the 27 artisanal farmers that he deals with always bring high-quality, processor-ready chickens.



The Artisanal Chicken® program enables farmers to raise between 600 to 3,000 birds annually. Participants have to adhere to the same exacting food safety, biosecurity and animal welfare standards as all other farmers who are granted growing rights and licences through CFO regulation. CFO also provides technical and educational support to new farmers, and is available for advice and assistance should they need it.

Currently, there are close to 150 of these farmers across Ontario, and there's room for more.

Rebecca Landman, of Landman Gardens and Bakery has participated in the program since 2016 and is most proud of the quality of the meat from her birds. Her business is located north of Grand Valley.

This year, she's raising 2,000 birds. Landman sells her chickens at her on-farm retail store, at a farmers' market in Orangeville, and to local restaurants. Chicken meat is also available through her Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) business.

To participate in the program, farmers need to fill out an application that goes through how they intend to produce their flocks, and the markets they intend to sell into.

Landman, who raises free-range, antibiotic-free and non-GMO birds was impressed with CFO's Artisanal Chicken® program right from the beginning.

"It was an awesome process," Landman said. "I was amazed at how open they were to different methods of raising chickens."

Chicken Farmers Of Ontario

(905) 637-0025
ontariochicken.ca

@OntarioChicken
ChickenFarmersofOntario
Chicken Farmers of Ontario



Independent meat processors looking to expand their local markets and differentiate their product lines are encouraged to contact CFO about the program at artisanalchicken.ca or reach out to farmers in their local areas to see if they are interested in participating.

