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GEORGIA CATTLEMEN INITIATE FEASIBILITY STUDY

MACON, Georgia – A group of cattlemen in the state of Georgia think that enhanced producer control might mean opportunity for one of Georgia's largest commodities. That's why they want to look at the supply chain and decide if there's a better way to "finish" cattle here and give local farmers the opportunity to grow the estimated \$3 billion industry.

Led by the Georgia Cattlemen's Association, a group of like-minded businesses have commissioned a feasibility study to determine if statewide finishing and processing facilities—which local cattlemen could own an interest in—makes strong economic sense. The University of Georgia's Center for Economic Development and Agribusiness is conducting the study.

Currently, Georgia's cattlemen typically ship their herds to feedlots in the West, so that the cattle can grow to an acceptable market size. The "finishing process," grows a cow by about 450 pounds, and typically lasts 120-180 days, helping to ensure a high quality product for Georgia's beef consumers. Cattle are raised in all 159 counties in Georgia.

"We think that financially, the opportunity to maintain ownership in the downstream process may make sense for area cattlemen," said Will Bentley, Executive Vice President of the Georgia Cattlemen's Association. "Eliminating the cost of shipping cattle out of state, combined with giving farmers the opportunity to own a share of the finishing process, could benefit Georgia's cattle industry. The feasibility study will help us understand if we are on track."

In addition to the Georgia Cattlemen's Association, the Georgia Farm Bureau, Georgia EMC, the Georgia Department of Agriculture, AgGeorgia Farm Credit, AgSouth Farm Credit, and Southwest Georgia Farm Credit, are all contributing to the cost of the study.

"We've seen vertical integration work in agriculture for a variety of row crops and other commodities and so we think there is the possibility that with the right business model, it could help grow Georgia's cattle industry," said Richard Monson, president of Southwest Georgia Farm Credit."

"We're looking at this as a way to grow agriculture, the cattle business, and to create jobs in Georgia's rural communities," said Keith Kelly of Kelly Products and Farm View Market, located in Madison, Georgia. "This is just the beginning—the study will help us determine if we should keep moving forward."

The feasibility study is expected to be complete during the fall of 2018.

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