

Value Added Producer Grant Program

Success Story: Agricola Meats Expands into New Markets with Branding & Marketing Campaign

\$204,098

USDA Rural Development
VAPG grant

9

Additional employees &
contractors

160 to 210

Increase of pigs
processed per year

11 to 109

Anticipated increase of
wholesale accounts

70 lbs. to 1400 lbs.

Business growth goal for
salame processing/mo.

\$200 Million

U.S. sales of cured meats
from 2014–2017

The NEED

Alessandra ‘Ale’ Rellini and Stefano Pinna operate a diverse permaculture farm in Panton, Vermont, where they produce authentic Italian cured meats from pasture-raised pigs. Beginning in 2013, they used a small, rented facility to make and distribute the products but output was limited. With demand for cured meats growing quickly, the farmers bought more livestock and a new facility in 2019 to expand operations. But to find new customers and grow their markets, they needed to reach out and rebrand.

The CHALLENGE

For farmers raising over 200 pigs (along with sheep, chickens and ducks), there is little enough time to butcher livestock and distribute products, much less execute a marketing campaign to add customers. Ale and Stefano rely on their Italian roots to create authentic cured meats, but they hire part-time employees for other work. With their expertise focused on sustainable farming and food quality, they’d benefit from more help with processing, distribution, and branding & marketing as the business grows.

The SOLUTION

USDA Rural Development awarded Agricola Meats a \$204,098 Value Added Producer Grant to facilitate the company’s recent expansion by enhancing its meat processing and distribution operations, and implementing a corresponding marketing campaign. These efforts are sustained by capable professionals: with the funding, Agricola Meats hired a full-time butchering & operations manager, two part-time sales associates, three operations contractors and three marketing contractors.

For program regulations and requirements, please go to the [USDA RD VAPG Fact Sheet](#)

