

H.R. 945/ S. 354 Strengthening Local Processing Act Summary

Co-Sponsored by Representative Chellie Pingree, Representative Jim Baird, Senator John Thune, and Senator Sherrod Brown¹

The Strengthening Local Processing Act provides small plants with the funds needed to grow, expand, and become more resilient to changes in market and supports a scale-appropriate approach to small scale slaughter and processing. The bill sections include:

Scale Appropriate Guidance and Assistance from Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

While the FSIS has made marked strides towards providing HACCP plans available for small and very small plants it can continue to work on the ease and accessibility of this information.

This act requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) to establish a searchable database of all the peer-reviewed, publicly-available validation studies for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans for small and very small plants; create and make available to small and very small plants models of HACCP plans for multiple types of small plants, including but not limited to a HACCP plans for slaughter plants and processing only plants, and based on the different types of products processed by plants; and create and publish guidance for public comment and input on how to get your HACCP plan approved.

Increasing Outreach and Expanding Cooperative Interstate Shipment & State Inspection Cost Share

Currently, only 29 states have state Meat and Poultry Inspection programs, which allow for sale and shipment within the state and which are currently cost shared equally between the state and FSIS. This bill would increase the federal government's maximum cost share from 50 percent to 65 percent. This would help states with existing MPI programs cover costs, and it would incentivize additional states to establish MPI programs.

States that have MPI programs can also opt into the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) program which allows for interstate shipment for small plants. Currently, the USDA does not actively solicit movement into the CIS program, nor does it convey the costs and how the federal government will help support the state programs in a proactive manner.

This section requires FSIS to conduct outreach to states with state inspection programs that are not part of the CIS program, and requires FSIS to submit a report to the House and Senate Agriculture Committees each year detailing the activities and the results of the outreach conducted. It increases the amount of cost share USDA will pay for from 60% to 80% of the total program costs, and changes the small plant eligibility size for participation in this program from plants with less than 25 employees to plants with less than 50 employees.

Small Plant Grant Program

Creates a new grant program to provide reimbursement grants to help federally inspected, state inspected, and exempt small and very small plants expand infrastructure to increase harvest and processing capacity, including support for existing plants and new small scale meat slaughter and processing plants. To precisely target the desired size of plants, this section limits grants to a maximum size of \$500,000 and has \$20 million a year in appropriations authorization.

Small Processor Training, Education, and Technical Assistance Grants

Creates Meat Processing Training Program Grants for institutions, small, and very small plants to assist and train small plant operators, small plant employees, and the next generation of meat processors and butchers. Provides authorization for \$10 million a year in authorization of funding, per each program - one processor focused and one institutionally focused towards non-profits, higher education, and other skill training programs.

The following national organizations endorse the Strengthening Local Processing Act:

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, The Association of American Meat Processors, The Niche Meat Processors Assistance Network, the US Cattlemen's Association, National Farmers Union, the American Grassfed Association, The National Bison Association, and the American Pastured Poultry Producers Association.