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The Niche Pork Production Handbook

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The Niche Pork Production Handbook

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Summary and Implications
Niche pork markets grew rapidly in the late 1990’s and have continued to expand. There are currently at least 35 niche pork markets active in Iowa. These range from direct sales to consumers by individual farmers to organized marketing groups. Marketers consistently report more demand for pork than the existing supply of pigs that meet the niche market criteria. They also consistently report a shortage of producers and the expectation that the niche markets will continue to grow.

The lifestyle and financial opportunities offered by niche pork markets are attractive to many individuals. These individuals may have little or no experience with raising pigs. Much of the existing pig production resources are not appropriate for this audience. To address these needs, a Niche Pork Production handbook was developed in 2007. The handbook is a collection of 30 individual leaflets addressing practical issues of niche pork production. The handbook is available for download from the Iowa Pork Industry Center website: http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/publications.html.

Results and Discussion
The handbook is a collection of 30 individual leaflets addressing practical issues of niche pork production. The handbook is available for download from the Iowa Pork Industry Center website: http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/publications.html. Topics addressed in the handbook include records, environment, nutrition, reproduction and genetics, production flow, pork quality, pig husbandry, managing feed costs, and managing non-feed costs.

Niche pork production is growing rapidly in the United States. In some markets, demand for pork exceeds supply. Opportunities exist for producers who are willing to raise pigs according to the specifications of a niche market. Meeting these guidelines can be challenging, but a growing number of producers are demonstrating the viability of this type of pig production.

Pig production is constantly changing, and niche pork is no exception. Success depends on the producers’ ability to innovate and learn from their peers and neighbors. Individuals should seek opportunities to network with other producers and service suppliers such as veterinarians and...
nutritionists, and to interact with extension and university staff.

Niche pork production offers lifestyle and financial opportunities that are attractive to many individuals. The low capital nature of most operations make it a good complement to other farming activities or as partial employment for someone who wants to remain connected to livestock production. Niche pork production rewards pig husbandry, attention to detail, and innovation. The Niche Pork Production Handbook provides useful insights that will encourage discussion and innovation among niche pork producers as well as technical information about raising pigs for niche markets.