

Cost of Production

Pastured Organic Poultry

Environmental Scan

Introduction

This environmental scan reviews available data and other resources on the economics of pastured poultry, and primarily focuses on Certified Organic production. The first section reviews information from the Government of Canada on the cost of production (COP) data. While no data was found that addresses pastured poultry in particular, several sources offer background on COP methodologies as well as data spreadsheets. It is worth noting that outside of government websites, a number of farmers offer pastured poultry products in Ontario, but we were not able to identify technical information about how to raise pastured poultry, nor financial information that would support business planning.

Having identified a lack of data within a Canadian context we reviewed a number of publications from the United States. These reviews, coming from a comparable production context, ultimately comprise the largest section of this scan. Finally, we have highlighted books that specifically target small-scale diversified farmers and make a business case for pastured poultry.

Cost of Production Data: Canada

Ontario's main source for the cost of production data is through [Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs \(OMAFRA\)](#). OMAFRA offers general guides to COP budgeting, hiring, rental equipment, and several other useful resources. Amongst these, the most relevant cost of production information is the [budgeting tools for crop and livestock](#), which include several organic cash crops (corn, barley, oats, spelt, soybeans, and wheat). However, OMAFRA does not currently provide any information about poultry production.

Manitoba Agriculture provides [COP data and tools](#) for the province of Manitoba. These include crop production costs, a calculator for marketing and management, and the data for several specialty crops. Manitoba also offers [base data for organic cash crops](#), in particular for flax, peas, wheat, oats, hemp, beans, barley, fall rye, and wheat. These COP tools distinguish variable costs and fixed costs, and a separate tab is used to assess risks (insurance coverage and one-at-a-time stress tests). A summary sheet links all of these data points into convenient summary sheets, that also provide profitability and break-even analysis.

The Province of Saskatchewan offers a [crop planning guide](#) that includes the cost of production resources. This overview covers similar cash crops as the resources from Manitoba and uses a similar format.

Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba do not provide COP data for organic or conventional pastured poultry production systems. Other resources about the organic sector (e.g. COTA 2018, OVCRT 2015) give an overview of main crops, but no information about pastured poultry.

Cost of Production Information: United States

Several government resources provide budget data on pastured poultry:

- **ATTRA** the U.S. based National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, offers a range of literature about small-scale poultry on their [website](#). It includes a dedicated [website for organic poultry](#). Two of the best entries into the business side of pastured poultry are from ATTRA. First, a comparative budget between slow-growing and fast-growing organic broilers ([Betsy Conner 2010](#)). Second, a more general publication [Meat Chicken Breeds for Pastured Production](#) also delivers a range of financial data.
- Other **ATTRA** resources include *Growing Your Range Poultry Business: An Entrepreneur's Toolbox*; *Pastured-Raised Poultry Nutrition*; *Small-Scale Poultry Processing*; *Small-Scale Egg Handling*; *Organic Poultry Production: Providing Adequate Methionine*
- **Via the program SARE, the USDA** provides a free download [Profitable Poultry: Raising Birds on Pasture](#) (2012). This bulletin combines farmer experiences and the latest research to serve as a comprehensive primer on pastured-poultry systems.

Several U.S. universities and extension services offer enterprise budgets and other relevant resources for pastured poultry:

- The Center for Integrated Agriculture Systems of the **University of Wisconsin** offers an Excel spreadsheet [Poultry Enterprise Budget](#) (2003)
- **The Pacific Northwest Extension** Publication series is a collaboration of the University of Idaho, Oregon State University, and Washington State University. As part of this series, Publication PNW 665 offers a break-even analysis of small-scale production of pastured organic poultry. This can be downloaded [here](#) from Oregon State.
- **The University of Kentucky** offers a number of [resources on pastured poultry](#).
- **The Center for Integrated Agriculture, University of Wisconsin**, offers a [Poultry Enterprise Budget \(2003\)](#). Other resources include
 - An online book [Poultry Your Way](#) (2005)
 - A [research brief](#)
 - A research study for [large scale pastured poultry farming](#) (up to 25,000 birds per year) that offers detailed financial data (2003)
- **Indiana's University of Purdue** offers [extensive links](#) to small-flock production, as does the **University of Oregon State's** [extension service](#).
- **The Kansas Rural Center** Sustainable Agriculture Management Guide offers a [Pasture Poultry Enterprise Budget](#) (2003) for getting started with a new business enterprise.
- **Anne Fanatico** from the National Center for Appropriate Technology and **David Redhage**, Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, together wrote a publication

[*Growing Your Range Poultry Business: An Entrepreneur's Toolbox*](#). The publication covers a broad range of topics related to pastured poultry, including detailed financial information for business planning. An enterprise budget is given [here](#).

- **The Rodale Institute** offers information about establishing pastured organic poultry on their [website](#).

Books & Reports on Pastured Poultry with Financial Resources

- **Harvey Ussery** wrote *The Small-Scale Poultry Flock - An All-Natural Approach to Raising Chickens and Other Fowl for Home and Market Growers* (2013). Ussery offers “the most comprehensive guide to date on raising all-natural poultry for the small-scale farmer, homesteader, and professional grower. *The Small-Scale Poultry Flock* offers a practical and integrative model for working with chickens and other domestic fowl, based entirely on natural systems.”
- **Joel Salatin** offers insights into the Polyface Farm Model, [pdf here](#). His books include:
 - Pastured Poultry Profits: Net \$25,000 in 6 Months on 20 Acres (1993)
 - Pastured Poultry Manual: The Polyface Model (1993)
- **Heifer International** offers a project [case study booklet](#) on pastured poultry which features a number of farms and also summarizes all important aspects including economic numbers (2000).
- **John Suscovich's** book offers [*Stress-Free Chicken Tractor Plans: An Easy to Follow, Step-by-Step Guide to Building Your Own Chicken Tractors*](#) (2016). John later wrote *Pastured Poultry Packet #1* (2017). This book “walks you through the decisions you will make and the money you will spend to start your pastured poultry operation. Then through an easy to follow format we determine what each chicken is going to cost you to raise.”
- **Jody Padgham** wrote *Raising Poultry on Pasture: Ten Years of Success* (2006). This is a comprehensive guide-book for those interested in raising poultry on pasture. Numerous articles from a diversity of authors, each highlighting their "lessons learned" and "best practices." Organized in an easy-to-use format, topics range from brooding to processing, laying hens, to broilers and turkeys. Chapters on Marketing and Equipment help producers make decisions in these areas. Profiles of numerous successful producers and suppliers of specialized equipment from around the U.S. are included.
- **Ken Mleziva, Sighe Mleziva's** book offers [Pastured Poultry Pen](#) 10 x 10 Plans.
- **Kathleen E. Hillimire** from the University of California, Santa Cruz wrote [*Pastured Poultry/Crop Systems and Their Effect on Soil and Plant Quality, Food Safety, and Farmer Experience*](#) (2011).
- **Kimberley Willis, Robert T. Ludlow** wrote [*Raising Chickens For Dummies*](#) (2019)
- **Judy Pangman** wrote *Chicken Coops: 45 Building Ideas for Housing Your Flock* (2006). “Just like houses, chicken coops come in all shapes and sizes. Judy Pangman presents

how-to drawings and conceptual plans for 45 coops — from the strictly practical to flights of fancy — guaranteed to meet the needs of every bird owner, however big or small your flock may be. Colour photographs and innovative suggestions fill this encouraging guide, while lively anecdotes profile an array of coop builders and their various construction methods. Start building the coop of your chickens' dreams!"