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# Tri-State Poultry Producers Receive Technical Assistance and Support

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It used to be that if a poultry grower had a good flock, they had no trouble making a profit. However, changes in payment schedules, higher feed prices, and demands from integrators to upgrade facilities have caused many to go out of business and many others to rethink their involvement in the industry.

A combination of rising feed costs, slowing demand, and over production is buffeting poultry processors and growers nationally. Prices for corn and soybeans, the primary sources of chicken feed, have reached record highs. Processors and growers are also paying more for fuel and electricity.

Consumers are dining out less often, especially at casual sit-down restaurants like T.G.I. Friday's and Applebee's, where chicken is a menu staple. Sales to supermarkets and other retailers have not grown enough to offset the lost business,

experts say. That has led to an oversupply of chicken, keeping prices low and preventing processors from raising prices to cover their added costs.

But despite the industry's current woes, many producers remain optimistic. "We just love this way of life," says Bev Saunders, who, with her husband Al, has raised countless flocks in their chicken houses near the Oklahoma/Arkansas border. "It's almost unthinkable to do anything else."

Saunders Farms is an example of producers who continue to improve their houses. They make every effort to take advantage of new technology as it becomes available. They are presently testing wood-burning stoves to determine their effect on energy savings for the houses. Bev, as executive director of Poultry Partners, Inc., a 400-member trade association for growers in the Arkansas-Missouri-Oklahoma area, shares vital information with the growers through newsletters, seminars, and other meetings.

Over the past five years, Winrock International's U.S. Programs has assisted Poultry Partners, Inc. by providing support for their meetings, including presentations on ways to better their production, and keep more money "on the farm." This technical assistance has helped the producers on many issues facing the producers, including energy efficiency, manure management, and bird diseases. The association has been helped through funds Winrock International receives through USDA's Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program.

For more information, contact Donna Uptagrafft at [duptagrafft@winrock.org](mailto:duptagrafft@winrock.org) or (501) 280-3078.

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.



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