

TREND SPOTTER: GRASS-FED BEEF

This niche market offers big benefits.

When Will Harris of Bluffton, Ga., decided to transition his commercial beef business into the niche market of grass-fed beef, he was pleased to return to the production methods his ancestors used. Harris is a fifth-generation farmer who raises his cattle at the family's White Oak Pastures completely naturally.

Grass-fed beef has big advantages for the producer and the consumer. The meat has less chance of getting *E. coli* or mad cow disease than that of grain-fed cattle, says Harris.

Grass-fed beef is healthier as well—it's lower in saturated fats, and it is higher in omega-3 fatty acids and beta carotene than commercial beef.

Additionally, grass-fed beef is beneficial due to its environmental

sustainability. Harris' cattle roam and graze pastures freely, living solely on grass and hay. Producer prices for grass-fed beef are also excellent.

The hardest part of breaking into this niche has been getting his name out, Harris says. After a few years of doing demonstrations at local food events and grocery stores, Harris is now selling his beef in supermarkets and health-food stores.

Getting into this market takes time, research and patience. Harris' best start-up tip is to join the American Grassfed Association. For more information, check out www.americangrassfed.org and www.whiteoakpastures.com.

—Sarah Ludwig Rausch

