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## Farm-to-table options for NM could be left on the chopping block

Santa Fe, NM- Amongst the political angling and posturing during the 2021 Legislative Session, two agriculture bills are awaiting action that could take farm-to-table operations in NM off the chopping block and transform the state's rural economy. Representative Rebecca Dow (R-TorC) is leading a bipartisan effort, [HB 33](#), that would allow New Mexico to provide in-state meat inspections, and Representative Jack Chatfield (R-Mosquero) is working a concurrent angle, [HB 121](#), a bill that would expand meat processing and packaging in New Mexico.

New Mexico farms and ranches are currently forced to send their meat products out of state to national inspectors and processing facilities, in a system that prevents New Mexico meats from making their way locally from farm to New Mexico tables.

"I have spent my life dedicated to New Mexico agriculture and I know that if we can get meat inspections and processing operations in New Mexico, this would transform our rural economies," said Rep. Jack Chatfield (Mosquero). "My bill, HB 121, will establish meat processing facilities in New Mexico and promote growing our agricultural economy. These efforts, along with Rep. Dow's HB 33 will grow and sustain our agricultural communities."

COVID-19 has put tremendous strain on the entire New Mexico economy, and farmers and ranchers were not shielded from the economic impact of the shutdowns. At a critical moment during the pandemic, many New Mexicans became aware of the logistical issues surrounding buying local meats. With no local meat inspector or local processing operation, many New Mexicans had to maneuver their way through a complicated process to buy New Mexico homegrown meat products directly from agriculture producers, utilizing out-of-state inspectors and processing facilities.

"The meat inspection bill, HB 33, passed the Agriculture Committee and is waiting to receive funding in Appropriations, I am hopeful that this bill is funded because it will allow New Mexicans to purchase meats from truly local sources," said Rep. Rebecca Dow (TorC). "Our agriculture community sends New Mexico raised meats out of state for processing, and this is just one example of how our communities lose out on value-added agriculture. We often hear a lot about farm-to-table, and this effort along with Rep. Chatfield's HB 121 will make sure that New Mexico meats are sourced, inspected and processed in-state rather than by out of state national companies."

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