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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**WHITE OAK PASTURES OPENS GEORGIA'S FIRST ON-FARM PROCESSING PLANT  
TO INCREASE PRODUCTION OF HUMANELY-RAISED GRASSFED BEEF**

*April Event to Celebrate Completion of New Facility, a Model for Sustainable  
Agriculture, Environmental Stewardship and Humane Animal Treatment*

BLUFFTON, GA (April 16, 2008) – Just in time for Earth Day celebrations, White Oak Pastures ([www.whiteoakpastures.com](http://www.whiteoakpastures.com)), Georgia's leading grassfed beef producer, has announced completion of a long-awaited on-farm facility designed to process beef according to rigorous humane animal treatment standards and to minimize environmental impact. The company will celebrate the new plant's opening at an April 26 event on the Bluffton farm that has been in company founder Will Harris's family since 1866. The event will host representatives from Whole Foods Market, the OneGeorgia Authority, and the Early County Economic Development Authority, each of which contributed funds to construct the \$2 million facility.

“Having this plant on our farm means we will never again have to load cattle that were born and raised here onto an 18-wheeler,” said Will Harris, founder and owner of White Oak Pastures. “It is more humane for the animals and without a doubt better for the environment to have a closed production loop on the farm.” Prior to completion of the 5,329 square-foot facility, White Oak Pastures transported its cattle to a processing plant 100 miles away from Bluffton, according to Harris a journey that stresses the animals and contributes to global warming by expending fossil fuels in transport. With White Oak Pastures' expansion, several Southwest Georgia family farmers will also avoid shipping their

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cattle long distances by being invited to bring their beef to Harris's plant for slaughter and processing. "At least several farmers in our community will now have access to an old-fashioned, artisan-style butchering process," said Harris. "This will allow them to step out of the industrial beef processing complex and give them the ability to market their products as local, a label consumers are seeking."

According to Alice Rolls, executive director of Georgia Organics, White Oak Pastures is on the forefront of a more sustainable agriculture in Georgia. "Will is not just a farmer, but a true leader," said Rolls. "He is creating sustainable, healthy grassfed beef, and revitalizing local, small-scale processing in our rural communities as an alternative to the factory farm mentality so prevalent in today's agriculture."

The consulting firm led by Dr. Temple Grandin, the renowned animal welfare advocate and designer of humane animal slaughterhouses, designed the animal handling facility, which has received the judiciously awarded Certified Humane (<http://www.certifiedhumane.org>) designation from Virginia-based Humane Farm Animal Care, a leading nonprofit dedicated to animal welfare. The Certified Humane distinction mandates that producers raise beef without antibiotics or growth hormones and in a humane environment that allows them to "engage in their natural behaviors." White Oak Pastures' farm also has the Certified Humane designation.

According to Harris, the construction of the new plant is another step in the return to beef production the way it was before agricultural industrialization. "My grandfather always said that it's our job to take care of the land and the herd, and that if we do, they will take care of us," said Harris. "Without realizing it, my family went through a period of time in which we didn't do these things very well. We used chemical fertilizers and pesticides on our land and we used hormone implants and confinement feeding for our cattle – these were all considered to be cutting-edge production innovations at the time we implemented them, but now we know better." Today, White Oak Pastures is the largest USDA-Certified Organic farm in the state of Georgia. It does not use hormones or antibiotics on cattle, nor does it apply pesticides and chemical fertilizers to the land.

"As farmers, it's important to our livelihood to act as stewards of the land and reduce our carbon footprint," said Harris. "Choosing not to send our cattle away for processing is one way we can do that." Many beef producers send calves 1000-plus miles to industrial

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feedlots immediately after they are weaned from their mothers, and it is not uncommon for these facilities to feed 100,000 head of cattle at a time, not allowing them to ever step foot on pasture.

Also lessening the environmental impact of the cattle processing operation: a \$60,000 anaerobic digester that makes liquid organic fertilizer from the waste that would otherwise end up in a landfill. “George Washington Carver said, ‘In nature there is no waste,’” said Harris. “We’re proud to be able to say our plant is a zero waste facility.”

Leaders in Georgia’s sustainable food movement such as Slow Food US Southeast Regional Governor Julie Shaffer, point to the new plant as a harbinger of good things for the state’s small, family farms. “The opening of the processing facility at White Oak Pastures will be a gigantic step in the right direction because it will benefit many small, sustainable family farms in South Georgia,” said Shaffer. “Will Harris is a brilliant visionary and leader of the local, sustainable food movement in Georgia, and he’s a personal hero of mine!”

In early 2007, White Oak Pastures was the recipient of a \$461,865 OneGeorgia Authority equity loan to fund construction of the on-farm processing plant. In addition to the OneGeorgia loan, White Oak Pastures also received loans of \$450,000 from natural foods retailer Whole Foods Market and \$150,000 from the Early County Development Authority.

“The Whole Foods Market Local Producer Loan Program was set up specifically to assist farmers like Will Harris,” said Joey Herndon, vice president of purchasing, Whole Foods Market South Region. “By offering support to Will’s expansion, we are able to bring a better product to our shoppers while reducing the environmental footprint it takes to do so. We are delighted to carry Will’s fresh, local grassfed beef in our stores.”

The on-farm facility will allow White Oak Pastures to significantly expand production and distribution of its beef. The Publix supermarket chain has been carrying White Oak Pastures grassfed ground beef at its stores throughout the Southeast since 2005, and Whole Foods Market started carrying the company’s fresh steaks, roasts, and ground beef at its butcher counters in 2007. White Oak Pastures was recently awarded the Grand Prize for its grassfed beef ribeye at the 2008 Flavor of Georgia contest sponsored by the state, besting more than 160 new food products.

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“We think our beef tastes better and is actually healthier for you because our animals spend their lives as nature intended, roaming freely in the pasture and grazing on grass,” said Harris. Grassfed beef is lower in saturated fat and higher in essential nutrients such as Omega-3, a fatty acid believed to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.

The outdoor festivities at White Oak Pastures will take place Saturday, April 26 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and will include chuck wagon-style cooking featuring dishes made with White Oak Pastures' beef, wine from local vintner Stillpond Vineyards, a market with local handcrafted foods and crafts, a mule drawn wagon to give visitors tours of the farm, music from a local band and a ribbon cutting ceremony at 1:00 p.m.

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White Oak Pastures ([www.whiteoakpastures.com](http://www.whiteoakpastures.com)) is a family-owned and operated grassfed beef producer that is committed to the principles of sustainability and stewardship. The five-generation farm has operated continuously on the same land in Early County, Georgia for more than 140 years. White Oak Pastures beef can be purchased at more than 200 Publix supermarkets ([www.publix.com](http://www.publix.com)) throughout the Southeast, at Whole Foods Market locations in the Atlanta area, and is distributed by Tree of Life ([www.treeoflife.com](http://www.treeoflife.com)).