

***Regulating "Good" Meat:***  
*The influence of socio-cultural and moral perspectives on meat safety regulations*

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# GENESIS OF THE PROJECT

## Local Environment

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## Tracing the unintended consequences of food safety regulations for community food security and sustainability: small-scale meat processing in British Columbia

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### ALTERNATIVES



Every day, all across *la belle province*, hundreds of brand new baby cows are born – about half a million a year in total. They all enter the world wobbly, spindly legged and doe eyed, but are destined for a range of different experiences.

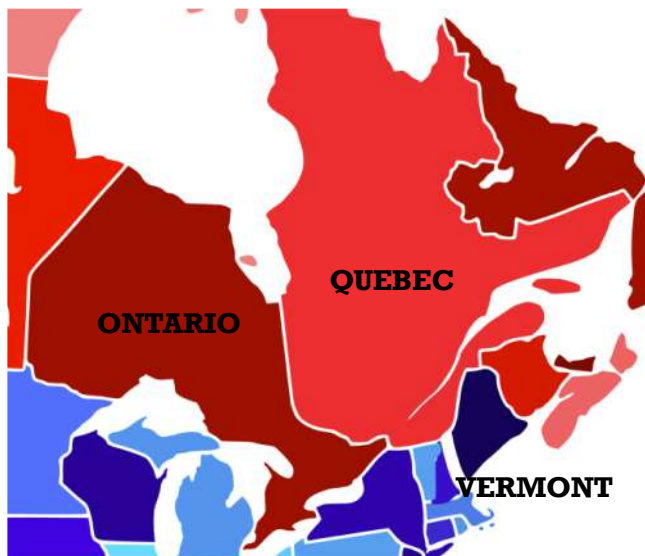
About 150,000 of them are born on *cow-calf operations*. These are farms that resemble the average person's idea of a farm: wood-edged fields, rickety barns, men in checked paddled over shirts tending to lengths of electric wire fence and repairing chunky farm machines. Calves spend their first six to ten months here with their mothers grazing on grass. After six to ten months, having grown to a size of 500 to 800 lbs, most of these calves, now called

*feeder cattle*, are sold to feedlots where they spend the rest of their lives being *finished*, or to put it less politely, fattened for slaughter. Feeder cattle are fattened until they graduate to the status of *fed cattle* and are then slaughtered at 16 to 20 months, their growth accelerated by rich feed, mostly corn, and by growth-promoting antibiotics and sometimes hormones as well.

A small proportion of the calves born each year stay on their birth-farms and continue their lives on grass, or part time in a stable and part time on pasture, and are not transferred to intensive feeding but rather finished more gently and naturally. They eat grass in the summer and hay or silage in the winter, and are usually given grain with a lower protein mass than corn, such as oats, barley, or peas, as a supplement. It is frequently, though not necessarily, the case that farmers who decide to raise their animals in this way also avoid growth-promoting antibiotics and hormones. These calves therefore take a longer time to reach physical maturity, first slowly building muscle, and only after muscle development is completed, the inter-muscular fat so desired by beef consumers. These cows are usually slaughtered at 22 to 26 months.



# A TALE OF 3 JURISDICTIONS



...and 5 regulatory regimes

## **ONTARIO**

- OMAFRA & CFIA

## **QUEBEC**

- MAPAQ & CFIA

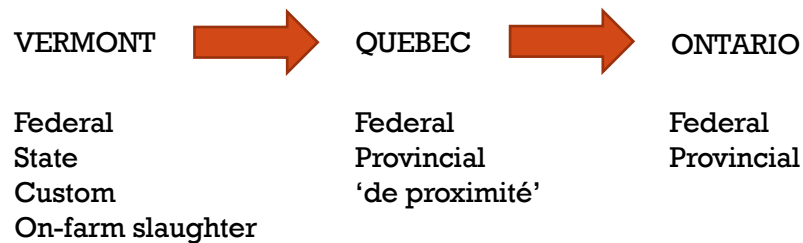
## **VERMONT**

- USDA (FSIS) & Vermont Meat Inspection Program



# HYPOTHESIS

- Meat inspection systems as a spectrum of food safety governance
- Social, cultural, moral, and economic factors influence the flexibility of animal slaughter regulations and inspection requirements
- Strong preference for local food should translate into more adaptive and tiered slaughter regulations



# CONTEXT AND COMPLEXITY

3 examples of context and complexity in meat inspection

1. Outcome-based requirements vs Prescriptive requirements
  - dichotomy does not capture nuance
2. Influence of market forces on individual experience of safety regulations
  - when barriers are not about regulations but economies of scale
3. Ritual slaughter exemptions
  - food safety/animal welfare



# REGULATING 'GOOD' MEAT

- What is good food?
  - Context-specific
- All roads lead to Rome
  - Food safety as journey or destination (or both)?
  - Risk management: Risk is a “necessary corollary to freedom and choice” (Garland)
- The danger of the single story
  - Cannot understand food safety in isolation from agricultural policy and economics
- There's more than one way to skin a cat
  - Ritual slaughter exemptions



*Thank you*

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