



DUPLICATE

Update

A Publication of the Association of Small Farms for the Environment

BUY FRESH AND BUY LOCAL

A Necessary Weapon in Our Battle with Hog Factories

We have borrowed the title for this article from the PASA (Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture) campaign, started last year. Though our focus is on hog production, we think our argument applies to every small farm or market because they are all trying to survive in a world increasingly dominated by one kind of factory or another.

Bucky Ziegler is a highly respected farmer in Limestone Township, Montour County, who uses his 270 acre Paradise Valley Organic Farm to provide consumers in the area organically grown, healthy, good tasting pork, chicken, turkeys, and eggs. He owns his own animals and feeds them entirely from crops grown on his farm, with the exception of organic minerals he buys to supplement the feed. His animals graze on his pastures except in the coldest parts of the winter, when they are housed in a barn. He owns a farm that has been in his family since 1967.

Throughout the year, Ziegler sells his pigs from his farm, on the hoof or after they are processed by nearby slaughterhouses – ones certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture – into chops, bacon, or ham in vacuum sealed packages. He sells broiler chickens from May to October, turkeys for Thanksgiving, and has fresh eggs, organic feeds and seeds, and minerals available the year around.

Before he started his pig breeding operation two years ago, Ziegler had raised feeder pigs (he bought them as piglets, sold them as adults) and sheep for about ten years. Last year, he started a cattle breeding operation where he will use the heifers he owns to create a small herd of cattle for eventual sales of beef to his customers. He is able to make a living from the combined sales of his animals and other products to people in the area.

Quite notably, Ziegler does all this without a contract with a big company like Hatfield Meat. He and other farmers not contracting with a corporation are obviously going against the grain of modern agribusiness, which, with all the power of the government behind it, is gradually wiping them from the face of the earth. The corporations explain this trend by claiming that the factories, precisely because they are factories, produce a cheaper product.

The claim that factory farms are “more efficient” than all small-scale farms is a great myth that needs an ongoing debunking.

In fact, there is accumulating evidence that many of these small-scale farmers can exist and even prosper because they actually produce a better, cheaper product than the huge companies. In our fight against hog factories, it is important to realize that this growing niche that small farmers have carved out for themselves is also a growing chink in the armor of factory farming. Let’s start our own debunking with some comparison shopping.

I. Comparing Prices with the Supermarket

When we toured Ziegler’s farm in late February we asked him about his pork prices, and then we went directly to Weis Market in Milton to find about Hatfield Meat prices for the same products. Here are the results:

	Paradise Valley Farm	Hatfield Meat (Weis Market)
Pork Chops (lb.)	\$3.50	\$3.60
Pork Sausage (lb.)	2.50 - 3.50	3.00
Bacon (lb.)	2.75	3.99
Ham (lb.)	3.50 - 3.70	3.25 - 3.50

Generally speaking, these prices are about the same, and this might come as surprisingly good news for people who prefer organically grown food. A main reason why Ziegler can compete

is that all his revenue gets poured directly back into his operations or into paying living costs. For Hatfield, though, in addition to its production costs, it has relatively enormous overhead costs, including paying for advertising and marketing, lawyers, nutrient management experts, transportation (an increasing proportion of its product is

shipped to Japan), and for all the political costs it incurs to help assure that the legislature passes laws favoring agribusiness. These immense overhead costs explain why Hatfield needs to use factories to produce its pork and why, as we shall see, it must shift to others the very substantial environmental costs of having its hogs raised that way.

Yet, without even taking into account these environmental costs – which we will consider below – there is growing evidence that many small-scale farmers can grow hogs more economically than factory farms. Some examples follow.

GOOD NEWS! BEACHEL PERMIT DENIED

Check page 4 for details.

II. "Small is More Efficient" in Texas, Iowa, and in Lots of Other Places

Recently, faculty and staff at Texas Tech University developed a research farm to explore profitable systems they call "animal-environment-worker, and community-friendly." In one prototype production system, which raised 600 sows on 200 acres, the researchers found that the operation provided:

...improved pig health, a better work environment, less odor, less microbial activity, fewer regulatory problems and lower start-up and operating costs. More specifically, they found it costs \$23.20 to raise a pig in "intensive outdoor" production versus \$31 in a typical confinement system.

An Iowa State study of relative costs at several outdoor and confinement systems showed that:

Although outdoor farrowing produced fewer piglets per litter, the lower costs of production make it more profitable than confinement. Fixed costs were \$3.33 less per pig weaned outdoors, 30-40% lower overall than confinement systems. Production cost for a 250 pound outdoor market hog were \$4.88 less per pig, reflecting feed, labor, repairs, utilities, health and fixed costs. (Both of these projects are described in Sustainable Agriculture Research and Educational Network Profitable Pork: Strategies for Hog Producers (2002), available at www.sare.org/bulletins/hogs).

Andre Leu, in Acres, USA (Jan./2004), describes a dozen striking examples of the relative efficiency of small farms, including this one:

Garry Zimmer, [an] American pioneer of biological farming, runs an organic dairy farm with his son in Wisconsin. In 2000 one of his re-mineralized alfalfa (Lucerne) fields produced a yield four times greater than the average for the district. He has increased the nutrient value of pasture by 300 percent and currently calves 150 cows every year without a single health problem.

These studies all emphasize that animals raised outdoors were healthier and needed fewer antibiotics, and that the farmers who raised them, and their neighbors, faced considerably fewer environmental hazards. (For more of these kinds of examples, see SARE, cited above, PASA, at www.pasafarming.org, and Acres, USA, info@acres.usa.com).

Though these few studies do not prove the case, they represent a growing challenge to the widely believed myth that factory farms are more efficient. Not only that, such studies typically understate the efficiency differences between factory farms and small-scale farms because they do not incorporate into the mix the extensive environmental costs of factory farming. We turn to that matter now.

III. The Unmeasured Environmental Costs of Factory Farms

As a first estimate of how extensive these environmental costs might be, we should remember that big meat companies draw up contracts with local factory farmers making sure that all such costs are borne by the farmers that raise their hogs, and by their neighbors. Without question, the main burden the companies seek to avoid comes from the vast quantities of liquid manure that are generated at a hog factory, an example the 2.5 million gallons a year generated by a factory housing 4,000 hogs. Agricultural economist John Ikerd explained the point this way in a 1977 speech:

If you spread out the hogs and let hog manure lay where it falls in a pasture, it doesn't bother anyone very much. But if you start collecting it, flushing it, spreading and spraying it around

- all normal practices in confinement hog operations - it becomes air pollution. Water pollution also is a symptom of the same basic problem - too much manure in one place. ("Top Ten Reasons for rural communities to be concerned about large-scale, corporate hog operations." <http://www.ssu.missouri.edu/faculty/jikerd/papers/TOP10.htm>.)

This is not to say that small hog farmers don't cause pollution with the manure lying "where it falls," but no small hog farm has the capacity to do what factory farms do as a matter of course: pollute the air both inside and outside the factory, spread pathogens over vast areas of the land, inevitably pollute local water systems, and cause a catastrophe when manure lagoons are overwhelmed by storms. We also know that hog factories create health problems for people who work and live next to them, as well as financial losses to their neighbors.

How much would it cost a factory farm to reduce its pollution of the air and the water down to the level at Bucky Ziegler's farm? The answer is that they can't because the technology is not available and likely never will be. So, we are left with wondering how much would it cost a factory farm to install the technology that currently is available? Such a figure would help us to know how much more Hatfield bacon would cost if its factories were made to try to minimize their pollution.

First of all, how much would it cost to end the stink of a hog factory? The latest solution is to install a "methane digester," with covered lagoons of liquid manure outside the barns. These digesters extract and isolate the methane from the lagoons and thus extract one principal cause of the stench of a hog factory (but don't reduce the stench from the manure inside the barns). How much does it cost for a digester at a hog factory housing, say, 4,000 hogs? Available data indicate that the probable cost for a system that includes digester, lagoons, and a generation plant to provide power for the farm, is between \$300,000 and \$400,000. The payments on the huge capital costs of digesters are designed to be offset in varying amounts when the methane is used to heat areas of the factory or generated into electricity to reduce other power costs, or to be sold to utilities. (For these cost estimates, along with 400 pages of information about digester technology from the perspective of those advocating them, see: Water Environment Federation, Anaerobic Digester Technology in Animal Agriculture: A National Summit, June 2003.)

But, even with offsetting payments, digesters still don't pay for themselves. According to a study by Global Resource Action Center for the Environment (GRACE), "...no methane digester in the United States has been an acceptable investment unless it was partially supported by a government subsidy." ("Methane Digesters," June, 2003. www.gracelinks.org.) Giving a fine credence to this claim is the recent Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Growing Greener grants to half a dozen dairy farms to help them finance manure digesters, including one to a Lancaster dairy farm of \$367,412. These grants, which are financed by taxes, mean that you and I are chipping in to help agribusiness destroy small farming in the state.

What else would a factory farm need to do to minimize its pollution, other than reducing its stench? We found one answer in a study done at the University of Iowa in 2002, "Iowa Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations: Air Quality Study" (<http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/ehsrc/CAFOstudy.htm>). After showing how factory farms pollute the inside and outside air with ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and particulate matter, the study lists techniques and equipment necessary to reduce such air pollution at a CAFO with manure lagoons outside the barns:

1. Frequent, short-term pressure washing and scraping of feeding floor.
2. Urine separation on feeding floor, with complete scraping, water follow-up, and air exchange avoidance with room air.
3. Dust suppression using oil sprayed on internal building surfaces.
4. Dust and gas suppression in barns using biofilters.
5. Anaerobic methane digesters for liquid manure yet unspread.
6. Manure spreading with an injection system with full soil coverage.

What do these biofilters, digesters, and injection systems cost, beyond the \$350,000 for the digester? What about the various cleaning, scraping, and pressure washing techniques? If we summed up all these equipment and labor costs, and then added the sum to the price Hatfield Meat had to pay contract farmers for their hogs, how much higher would be the price of Hatfield pork be at the supermarket? That's a good question, but one of the few groups that could afford to carry out such a massive statistical exercise is that of the big meat companies, and they don't want to know the answer.

Further, while we're on the subject, what about water pollution? If the manure spread on the fields migrates to streams, lakes, or wells? Or if a lagoon is overwhelmed by a tornado? We don't have the space to get into the probable costs of eliminating these possibilities, but one can easily imagine the expensive fortress a hog lagoon would have to be in order to survive a tornado or a hurricane. Our point is this: even without all the necessary statistics, we think it is obvious that if hog factories were forced to install technology and adopt techniques enabling them to reduce their pollution to the same level as the one at Bucky Ziegler's Paradise Valley Farm, they wouldn't be able to compete with him.

In one sense, this article is only appropriate for Pennsylvania, because many other hog producing states, such as Iowa, have passed laws and enforce existing ones that put a much greater burden on CAFOs to clean up their own environmental mess. How is our state different? The answer is rather incredible, and it stated succinctly by PennFuture this way:

Agriculture is exempt from Pennsylvania's air Pollution Control Act and no state laws require control of odor from agricultural operations. (Factory Farm Pollution in Pennsylvania, 2003, www.pennfuture.org)

Think about this quote for a moment, and then you will know exactly what we mean when we refer to the "power of agribusiness" in the state.

**Where to go if you want to
"buy fresh and buy local."**

For this issue, we are abandoning our usual practice of having a separate page for a message from the CUE Board and the list of donors to our previous newsletter (we will include the latter in our next issue). We do that so we can enclose a copy of the "Central Susquehanna Farm Market Map" which we hope will incline you to patronize the farms and markets highlighted there. We extend our thanks to the organizations that prepared the map and made it available to the public, and their names are listed on the back cover. Also, a more recent version of the Farm Market Map is due out this summer, and in our next issue we will tell you how to get a copy. ♦

IV. Two Other Costs, both Immense and Un-measured

Unfortunately, we still haven't covered all the external, unmeasured, and unpaid costs of factory farms. As one of them, we would need to add to the costs of factory farms the health consequences – including mental anguish – and declining property values of people when thousands of hogs become neighbors. If we made Hatfield Meat and their contracting farmers compensate such people, you can be sure that the price of their bacon would be higher. How much is fair compensation for a child with asthma, or for the neighbors of a hog factory who are stuck in their homes because they can't sell them?

Last of all, and perhaps most crucial, factory farming is wiping out small farms all over the state and over the nation. How much should we add to the price of Hatfield and Smithfield pork to compensate us all for the fact that their factory farming is transforming rural areas from a beautiful patchwork of small farms into gigantic grain fields surrounding rows of identical barracks, prisons that are full of hogs who never breathe fresh air until they are headed off to slaughter?

V. What About the Taste of Factory Farm Pork Compared to that at Paradise Valley Farm?

There is only one kind of evidence here, and it is anecdotal because human tastes are finally not subject to scientific analysis. Yet, there are a few such appraisals worth considering. One of them is by John Ikerd, from the same speech we cited earlier, who put it this way:

The argument that factory pork would be higher in quality doesn't hold... Pork would be more uniform because it would all come from the same basic genetic stock, as is currently the case with

chickens. However, consumers have different tastes and preferences – different perceptions of quality. Making all pork "the same" would not necessarily please more consumers. Greater profits for producers and processors, not lower costs or higher quality, is the driving force behind the current trend toward industrial hog production. The only ones who really need to shave another penny or two of production costs are those who are trying to export more pork into highly competitive world markets. That doesn't include many hog farmers or pork consumers. So, why should the general public support industrial hog production? (<http://www.ssu.missouri.edu/faculty/jikerd/papers/TOP10.htm>)

Why, indeed? What else can we say about the quality issue? As we learned as kids, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," and you can do your own testing by patronizing a few of the farms and markets on the Farm Market Map.

Conclusion

We are aware that the long-term solution to factory farms will be town supervisors who pass ordinances limiting or prohibiting corporate factory farms. Nevertheless, while we work to achieve that necessarily distant goal, in the short run we can still fight factory farms. Indeed, when you buy fresh and buy local, you can fight the hog farm battle on two fronts: you can enjoy really good tasting, healthy food, and while you're chewing away with pleasure you'll be enhancing the odds that the farmers you're buying from will be around next year to further your fight with the factories. Where can you find a better deal than that one? ♦

Task Force Meets with Officers from Country View Family Farm

In February, Task Force and OUE members Dave Laidacker and Charles Sackrey visited the Mt. Joy offices of Country View Family Farms (CVFF), a subsidiary of Hatfield Meat. They went there because CVFF tried to site two CAFOs in the Nippenose Valley (fought off successfully by citizens there) and has been trying to site the Beachel CAFO in Montour County (denied March 16th by DEP, as we announce at the beginning of the newsletter).

At the Mt. Joy meeting, Laidacker and Sackrey delivered copies of the OUE booklet, *The Case Against Hog Factories and the Case for Alternative Forms of Production*. The delivery aimed to provide CVFF with a sample of the scientific arguments against CAFOs and to describe them as a principal reason the Task Force will fight the siting of the Beachel application with all the means available to it.

As a follow up to that meeting, on March 15th three officers of CVFF – Bob Ruth, president, Jeff Ferrick, chief counsel, and Jennifer Reed, Nutrient Management Director – traveled to Lewisburg to meet with Task Force members Dave Hallows, Andy Lyon, Sally Lauver, Wayne Welshans, Laidacker and Sackrey, and Larry Breech of the Pennsylvania Farmers Union.

CVFF, according to Bob Ruth, procures hogs for Hatfield Meat, about two thirds of them from farmers who own their own hogs and about one-third from contracting fam-

ers. Ruth said that their "model," which includes factories of up to 4,000 hogs, lies somewhere between the small-scale farmers and the huge factories with up to 100,000 hogs. Ruth claimed that if properly managed his factories do not threaten neighbors, bring incomes and a few jobs to the area, and are the only way to save agriculture in the state.

Task Force members, in a variety of ways and voices, told Ruth that people fight his factories because they are convinced that the factories: are unhealthy to neighbors and reduce contiguous property values; are imposed on people by a corrupt political system that favors agribusiness, an example being the use of tax dollars to buy CAFOs digesters they can't afford; and that if politicians made CAFOs reduce their pollution to tolerable levels, most especially the expensive equipment that would reduce air emissions and odors, the factories wouldn't be able to compete with the small-scale farms they are driving out of business.

Larry Breech supplemented all these views and added much information about composting and other alternative ways to raise hogs, particularly in manure management. He said that in a number of ways the CVFF model was typical of factory farming in Pennsylvania as being far behind other states and Canada in the ways they thought about, managed, and used as

nutrients, the cascading hog manure from a hog factory.

What will come from this meeting? We can't know now, and our press deadline meant we had to submit this summary the day after the meeting. There was an agreement to keep open channels of communication. We believe, whatever else happens, that we achieved our principal aim of making our case in an informed and forceful manner, while emphasizing our unflinching determination to stop the spread of hog factories in our area. If we hear of other results, we will let you know. ♦

Beachel CAFO Permit Denied!

On March 16th, as we went to press, the DEP denied the first and second level applications by Doug Beachel and Country View Family Farms to build a 4,300 hog factory in Montour County. According to the DEP release:

Both of the applications contained technical deficiencies that were not corrected, even though Mr. Beachel was given a significant amount of time to do so...The lack of sufficient information meant DEP could not make a determination regarding the facility's compliance with our regulatory requirements.

Congratulations to Montour Citizens for a Clean Environment! MCEE, with help from many other members of the Task Force, did great work to stop this application – particularly the comprehensive and persuasive testimony it presented before DEP in January 2003. Like the Concerned Citizens of Nippenose Valley, the members of MCEE provide another sterling example for people who want to fight back the potential clutches of a hog factory.

Is this matter finally over? Perhaps not. According to a story in the Bloomsburg Press Enterprise (3-17), Beachel plans to push ahead. He says he has hired an engineer to help him respond to the technical deficiencies in his application and states he will have his two hog barns constructed by the end of this summer. Beachel also claims that during the battle over his plan to build a hog farm he has gained more friends than enemies. This is most certainly not the case, the

best evidence being that of the two hundred people who turned out at the January 2003 DEP hearing on his application, dozens testified against the application and only two spoke in its favor.

In any case, if Beachel applies again, he applies again, and if he does he will again face the full weight of the Task Force's opposition. ♦

UPDATES

Other good news from Task Force groups regards our goal to play a larger role in shaping local regulations regarding CAFOs. Butch Milheim, a member of Montour County Citizens for a Clean Environment, was elected as a supervisor in Limestone Township. Fred Callahan, a member of Concerned Citizens of Nippenose Valley, was elected as a supervisor in Limestone Township, Lycoming County. And, Concerned Citizens of Snyder County succeeded in getting one of its members, Donna Constant, appointed to the Middle Creek Township Planning Commission. With the Beachel application stalled, at least for now, the Task Force intends to focus more of its attention and time in an effort to add to the number of its members holding these local positions. ♦

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