

FACTORY FARMS ARE CONFINED FEEDING OPERATIONS



FOUR COMPANIES CONTROL 3/4 OF PORK PROCESSING IN CANADA



Beyond
Factory Farming



What is a factory farm?

Many of today's farms are actually industrial facilities, not the peaceful family farms most Canadians think of. Factory farms, also known as Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs) or Intensive Livestock Operations (ILOs), produce large volumes at low prices in order to turn a profit, offloading environmental, social and health costs onto the environment, workers, neighbours and consumers.

Factory farms are characterized by:

- Public health problems
- Pollution from manure
- Animal confinement
- Corporate control of food production
- Loss of community quality of life

What are the health risks associated with factory farms?

New diseases: Crowding, genetic uniformity and feeding regimes in factory farms create dangerous diseases such as High Pathogenic Avian Flu and Mad Cow disease.¹

Antibiotic resistance: Nearly all antibiotics used in agriculture in Canada are for growth promotion and to offset stress caused by overcrowding and confinement – not to cure sick animals.² Such use breeds antibiotic resistant bacteria that spread to other animals and humans. The WHO calls for ending use of antibiotics in livestock that compromise human medical care.³

Pathogens: Animal waste from factory farms creates hazards due to pathogens (such as e.coli) that end up in our water, our air, and our meat. Public health experts estimate that there are 11 to 13 million cases of foodborne illnesses in Canada every year.⁴

Dangerous hormones: The European Union prohibits imports of meat from animals treated with hormones. Canada did not meet EU food safety requirements due to free access to veterinary drugs with carcinogenic and/or mutagenic potential, "extra-label use" and poor residue detection and control systems.⁵

CMA calls for moratorium: The Canadian Medical Association has called for a stop to the expansion of industrial hog operations until adequate scientific data on health risks are obtained.⁶

What are the environmental risks associated with factory farms?

Manure leaks and spills: Animal waste from factory farms is stored in holes ("lagoons") dug in the earth that often leak or overflow, or stockpiled, then spread onto cropland. Odor problems and water pollution occur when more manure is applied than the crops on the surrounding land can utilize.⁷

Water pollution: The release of manure into water bodies can lead to fish kills, groundwater contamination, and poor drinking water quality.⁸

Ecosystem damage: Upstream factory farms are being investigated for damaging Lake Winnipeg and the southern portions of Lake Huron with bacterial contamination and by nutrient over loading, or eutrophication, which causes excess algae growth and loss of aquatic species.⁹

Air emissions: On a global perspective, livestock operations are responsible for two-thirds of nitrous oxide emissions and almost two-thirds of ammonia emissions. Cattle feedlot and liquid hog manure systems emit substantial methane as well. These gases contribute to climate change, acid rain and acidification of ecosystems.¹⁰

Toxic gases: Decomposing manure also emits hydrogen sulphide, a poisonous gas that has killed hog barn workers.¹¹

Do factory farms endanger the welfare of animals?

The internationally recognized requirements for animal welfare are freedom:

- from hunger and thirst
- from discomfort
- from pain, injury and disease
- from fear and distress
- to express normal behaviour

However, many animals in factory farms never see direct sunlight, their feet never touch the earth, and they are unable to behave naturally.

Sow stalls: Stalls confine pregnant sows for most of their lives. The sow cannot turn around, and has to eat, sleep, urinate and defecate in this tiny space. The vast majority of the 1.5 million sows in Canada are confined to stalls.¹²

Battery hens: Close to 98% of Canada's 26 million laying hens are kept in barren wire cages so small that the hens cannot spread their wings. The birds' bones become brittle and can snap through lack of exercise.¹³

Transportation: Centralized meat packing means animals are transported longer distances. Current regulations allow cattle to be transported continuously up to 52 hours without water, food or rest.¹⁴

Diseases due to stress: Because of unnatural living conditions, livestock experience a great deal of stress and are more susceptible to disease. Breeding for fast growth results in animals with weaker immune systems.¹⁵

Does factory farming pose a threat to family farms?

Yes: Factory farms are quickly taking over the livestock industry. The number of independent hog operations in Canada has declined by over 80% - from 33,760 in 1986 to 6,040 in 2006.¹⁶

Unfair competition: Two US-based meatpacking companies control three-quarters of cattle slaughter in Canada. Four companies control three-quarters of pork processing in Canada making it difficult for community-based meat processors serving local independent farmers to remain economically viable.¹⁷

Inappropriate rules: "One-size fits all" regulations disproportionately cost small farmers while shielding factory farms from complying with the kinds of regulations other large-scale industries are subject to.¹⁸

Loss of farmer control: The only gainers from the industrialization of the agri-food sector have been food consumers (cost wise and convenience wise) and large agri-business corporations that are seeing their market shares expand. Losers include the majority of farmers, who are increasingly merely managers for agri-business corporate bosses; consumers of nature, particularly of natural habitat and biodiversity; many flora and fauna species and domesticated livestock species.¹⁹



IS
YOUR
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Safe Food. Healthy Communities.



SUSTAINABLE FARMING: THE SOLUTION!

LOCAL FARMERS GROW HEALTHY FOOD

How do factory farms affect communities' quality of life?

Bad air: Neighbours and workers who are exposed to airborne factory farm emissions can suffer from:

- respiratory illness
- aggravated asthma
- lung damage
- sore throat
- headaches
- depression and feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- becoming carriers for viruses
- overall loss of quality of life²⁰

Lower property values: Lamont County, AB was ordered to reduce municipal property taxes within 2.5 miles of a large feedlot because the marketability and potential value of the residences were affected due to:

- potential contamination and possible depletion of groundwater supplies
- heavy truck traffic on county roads and roads within the Hamlet creating unsafe conditions for children and others
- the effects of dust and noise from heavy traffic
- strong and offensive odour
- unsightly residue left from the hauling of silage to and from the feedlot²¹

Culture and education: Shifting from smaller independent farms to the factory farm system erodes rural culture and destroys a rich and irreplaceable educational system - that of growing up on a family farm. ²²

Food security: Fewer farmers means reduced food security, as our food system becomes less resilient and adaptable.²³

Fewer families: As farms get bigger, fewer people are available to maintain utilities, care for the environment and provide other community services. Industrialization of agriculture also increases income inequality, further damaging the social fabric.²⁴

Is the takeover by industrial agriculture inevitable?

No: There are many viable and sustainable alternatives to industrial agriculture. A diversified family farm in which livestock are integrated into crop production contributes to a healthy environment, healthy animals, and a safe, regional and abundant food supply.

What can I do about factory farms?

Vote with your dollar: Do not buy meat raised on factory farms. Contact the Beyond Factory Farming office www.beyondfactoryfarming.org, the Canadian Organic Growers directory at www.cog.ca or go to www.eatwellguide.org for sources of non-factory farmed meat.

Talk to the manager: Urge your local supermarket and restaurant managers to sell local food from independent family farmers.

Organize your community: Educate, stage protests, and push for strong legislation and enforcement of regulations regarding factory farming. Visit our website at www.beyondfactoryfarming.org and click on Action.

Sustainable farming: the solution!

Socially responsible meat production is an integrated approach to raising animals that respects the environment, treats animals humanely, supports local communities, and is economically viable for farmers. In areas where small-scale organic and socially responsible farms are common there is a higher degree of social and cultural development, as well as more viable local businesses.²⁵

Socially responsible farming includes:

- certified organic farming
- farms under holistic management
- on-farm biodiversity that integrates crops and animals
- no hormone implants or injections or use of non-therapeutic antibiotics
- manure production not exceeding what can be utilized by crops grown on the land
- family or co-operatively owned and operated farms
- animals raised in an environment where they are able to behave naturally

Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) - local farms that grow food specifically for subscribing members, Good Food Box programs, farm-gate purchasing, local farmers markets and EatWellGuide.org are all important ways local producers and consumers support each other. Eating locally grown, freshly harvested food is the basis of a healthy diet - and it reduces food miles!

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The Beyond Factory Farming Coalition

The Beyond Factory Farming Coalition is Canada's national umbrella group of over 40 national, regional and local organizations that promote socially responsible livestock production.

Our vision is "Livestock production for health and social justice". Our mission is to promote livestock production that supports food sovereignty, ecological, human and animal health as well as local sustainability, community viability and informed citizen/consumer choice.

We help community groups faced with factory farm developments in their area. If you are being negatively affected by a factory farm, go to our website at www.beyondfactoryfarming.org to the Citizens' Guide to Confronting a Factory Farm. We also have information for consumers, students, researchers and journalists about factory farming and the socially responsible alternatives.

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