

Agribusiness Weekly

*A Weekly Compendium of National News
on Factory Farm Corporations Across the United States*
Prepared for the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committees of the
Pennsylvania House of Representatives and Pennsylvania Senate

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THE CLASSIC PIG IN A POKE: PENNSYLVANIA'S FACTORY FARMS

(Excerpted from the *Chambersburg Gazette* and authored by PennFuture)

During the last 20 years, agribusiness has been moving to bring the production side of the food equation under its control, taking over the production, processing, and distribution of our daily bread and meat.

As a result, Pennsylvania lost more than 3,500 swine farms between 1987 and 1997, while hog production climbed by about 10 percent. Hog farmers in the Commonwealth are raising around a million hogs a year, but on fewer and larger farms. In 1991, small swine farms with fewer than 500 pigs accounted for 33 percent of production. By 1998, their share had dropped to 13 percent of the market. At the same time, operations with more than 1,000 pigs increased their share of production from 47 percent to 74 percent.

Factory farming is being sold to farmers and Pennsylvania policy makers as the salvation of the Commonwealth's agricultural industry. In slick public relations presentations, the industry peddles the doctrine that small, independent farms are inefficient and more and more irrelevant in the global economy. Their mantra is that the only way to survive is to get a contract and get big. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture helps to spread the gospel, and many legislators believe it. But is this kind of agriculture really the salvation of Pennsylvania farmers?

In addition to the possible threat to human health by producing and spreading drug-resistant bacteria, factory farms have an immediate impact on their neighbors. Thousands of confined animals produce odors so foul that property values from miles around can decline. They also produce a waste stream that is untreated, held in lagoons that can leak, and disposed of on farm fields.

Nevertheless, some Pennsylvania farmers have eagerly adopted the factory farm model because of the promise of steady income from an integrator. They may live to regret that if public concerns about the safety of the food produced in factory farms continue to grow. What we may be left with will be bankrupt farmers, empty barns, and contaminated groundwater and fields harboring resistant bacteria.

The "advanced farm" model of agriculture could be the classic pig in a poke.

OHIO CORPORATION RECALLS BEEF AND HAM BECAUSE OF POTENTIAL SALMONELLA CONTAMINATION

(Reprinted from Pennsylvania Newspapers)

A Cincinnati corporation is recalling 13,600 pounds of sliced beef and ham products nationwide because of possible salmonella contamination.

Hillshire Farm & Kahns, also doing business as Sara Lee Sausage Co., issued the recall Wednesday after one person reported getting sick after eating the meat. The following products are being recalled, according to the Agriculture Department: (1) Sara Lee USDA Choice Cajun Style Beef, 8 oz. packages, marked "Sell by Jun27 AS3D", (2) Sliced USDA Choice Cajun Style Beef, 8 oz. packages, marked "Sell by JUN27 AS3D", (3) Sara Lee USDA Choice Roast Beef, 8 oz. packages, marked "Sell By JUN27 AF1D" or AF2D, (4) Sliced USDA Choice Roast Beef, 2-pound packages, marked "Sell by JUN27 AF1D" or AF2D, and (5) Sara Lee Brown Sugar Ham, 8 oz. packages, marked "Sell by JUL 4" with AF3D, AF4D, AS1DF, or AS2D labels.

Salmonella can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in children, the frail and the elderly. Healthy people infected with salmonella often experience fever, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting.

TGI FRIDAY'S TO CARRY ANTIBIOTIC-FREE AND FREE-FARMED HAMBURGERS

(Excerpted from the *PR Newswire* and a Company Press Release)

One of American's greatest tasting hamburgers just got better. Continuing its commitment to serving great tasting and high quality food, T.G.I. Friday's (R) is now the largest casual dining restaurant chain to feature all-natural Meyer Natural Angus (TM) beef burgers.

With Americans increasingly craving high quality beef, T.G.I. Friday's timely introduction of an all-natural Angus burger resonates with today's burger connoisseur and consumers who want the assurance of source-verified, all-natural hamburger. These new 100 percent natural Angus beef burgers are made from Meyer Natural Angus cattle, raised on a strict diet of wholesome forages and grains. The cattle are never administered hormones, antibiotics, or fed animal byproducts.

"When you think of innovation, words like high-tech and futuristic often come to mind. But sometimes, innovation means looking back instead of ahead — back to a time when ranchers raised their animals without antibiotics or artificial growth hormones. Turning to nature, instead of technology, put us on the path to our latest innovation — Friday's 100 percent natural Angus burger", said John Gilbert, senior vice president of marketing for Carlson Restaurants Worldwide, parent company of T.G.I. Friday's restaurants.

In addition to its remarkable taste, Friday's selected Meyer Natural Angus beef for its hamburgers for several additional reasons:

*Meyer Natural Angus completely rejects growth-stimulating antibiotics and added hormones. In the livestock industry, it is common practice to administer antibiotics in the feed of conventionally raised animals to stimulate their appetite to make them grow faster. In addition, the American Medical Association recently published concern about the use of antibiotics in livestock — citing alarm about antibiotic resistance in humans. T.G.I. Friday's use of all-natural burger is a step in the right direction regarding this issue;

*Meyer Natural Angus is "free-farmed" certified by the American Humane Association;

*Meyer Natural Angus supplies source-verified hamburger. This means that burgers served in Friday's restaurants can be traced back to the Meyer Natural Angus ranch from which they came — guests can rest assured that Friday's burgers are made from cattle carefully raised on an open range, free from stress, antibiotics, and hormones.

CONGRESSIONAL REPORT: LARGE FARMS GETTING BIGGEST SUBSIDIES

(Excerpted from Iowa Newspapers)

Large farms are getting a bigger share of government subsidies, and the payments are making it difficult for young people to go into farming because land values have been driven up, according to a congressional report.

Farms with sales of more than \$500,000 a year received 22 percent of government payments in 1999, up from 13 percent in 1993, the General Accounting Office said in a report being released Tuesday by the Senate Agriculture Committee. Farms with sales of between \$250,000 and \$500,000 received 21 percent of payments in 1999, compared to 18 percent in 1993.

"The bottom line is we must have a fairer system for providing support to farmers in the next farm bill," said the Senate committee's chairman, Iowa Democrat Tom Harkin.

Both the House and Senate Agriculture committees are holding hearings this week on a rewrite of farm programs that are set to expire in 2002. One major issue facing lawmakers is whether to raise the limits on subsidies that individual farmers can receive.

The GAO report said the federal payments hurt aspiring young farmers by making it more expensive to buy or rent land. Finding affordable land is the biggest obstacle to people who want to get into farming, the report said, adding that the value of government payments "causes sellers to ask higher prices or prospective purchasers to bid up the price of the limited farmland on the market."