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## THE BIGGER PICTURE OF AGRICULTURAL NEEDS

Factory Farming is a term used to describe a system of rearing livestock in confined indoor facilities under controlled conditions. By some individuals' definition, factory farming is a cruel way of treating animals as a commodity used for mass production and profit. Where the animals are housed in large quantity, deprived of room to move or lie down. They are often fed drugs to control diseases and to promote faster growth cycles. Because of the confined space, chickens beaks are cut, and pig's tail removed to prevent aggression of the animals. (ASPCA) In fact the term "Factory Farms", according to the EPA, is used in reference to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation known as, CAFO's. These facilities raise animals in a confined setting for 45 days to 12 months. (EPA)

However, farmers object to the term "Factory Farms" and feel the new farming technology helps the animals by controlling their environment. In these environments the animals are fed regularly, housed indoors where they are sheltered from being exposed to extreme temperatures. (CORNELL) This attitude is narrow in scope, factory farming in fact has led to, economic hardship for small farmers, massive environmental destruction, a risk to human health, and institutionalized animal cruelty.

In addition we are rapidly losing our traditional full-time farmers. Most of the midsize "family farms" are becoming dominated by larger factory farms. Farmers are forced to fall inline using factory farming techniques to make any profit. The

2007 Census of Agriculture showed 80,000 midsize farms have been lost since 2002, larger farms are becoming larger and more industrialized. (AGCENSUS) This reflects a system designed to promote the biggest and mostly industrialized farms at the expense of the family farmers. Many family farmers who are caught in the process have signed contracts with large production companies that manage and dictate how they farm in order to comply with their contract requirements. As a result farmers are urged to borrow money to build a bigger facility to house more livestock at the expense of the farmer. (TAKEPART)

Meanwhile most water pollution from these farms is a result of poor storage or disposal methods of animal waste. Most farms use water tanks, known as "lagoons" that house the waste. Some of these lagoons are known to leak or overflow into ditches, streams, or seep into our land and water wells. In order to dispose of the waste stored in a lagoon farmers spray the waste onto the land as fertilizer. Unfortunately these farms produce more waste than can be applied safely and over spray runs into nearby water systems polluting them with chemicals, and diseases.(NRDC)

According to the CDC (center of disease control), high demand for production of livestock and crops has raised the level of contaminants in our soil and water supply. The CDC cites findings in the 2002 Nation Water Quality Inventory report to Congress that agricultural pollutions is the "leading cause of impairments in lakes, ponds and reservoirs". (CDC) The news of food contamination and recalls has almost becoming common place. For instance the FDA reported 176 food recalls in 2011, as reported by Food Safety News. (FOOD).There is estimated 48 million food

contaminated illness reported each year in the United States. Out of these cases over 128,000 people were hospitalized and 3,000 deaths. Salmonella outbreak was the cause of 1 million of these foodborne illnesses', at a cost of 365 million dollars in medical expenditures and a recall of 500 million eggs. (CDC) In other words the true expense of our cheap meat production is not factored into the cost for the cleanup of contaminates or the medical expense. Communities are unlikely to find the cause for most of the illness reported, unless a food contaminate can be recalled back to the source, the debt is not paid by those who pollute.

Consequently population growth is a driving force on how we have to balance the growing need of crops and livestock production with the challenges of protecting natural resources, controlling soil depletion, and loss of agricultural land. The United States population in 1960 was 180.7 million as of 2011 the population has grown to 311.6 million. (TRADING). As populations grow farm land is turned into urban developments. According to a report by Rod Swoboda, in a Farm Progress article, the United States has lost more than 23 million acres of agricultural land in the last 25 years, the size of Illinois and New Jersey combined. (FARM). Is it any wonder why factory farms have developed, with no free range the animals are house in buildings and small cages or crates. The pain and suffering these animals go through is heartbreaking. Individuals have documented online videos of the treatment of these animals. There are "AG, GAG" laws in place in five states now, including Utah, to prohibit recordings without permission as a way to "silence whistleblowers" on the conditions of facilities and the poor treatment of the animals. (FOOD)

Finally our current agricultural system is not sustainable at the high rate of production demands. We are depleting our natural resources, poisoning our water systems and contaminating our soil. By becoming better educated on where the food comes from, and the actual cost of demands. Individuals can find better ways of consumption; improvement of Government regulation, farming techniques in conservation, support of local farms, limiting the intake of meat, egg and dairy products are just a few things individuals can do to help minimize these problems.

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