

As a strong supporter of our agricultural community and with extensive research into this matter, I would like to suggest the creation of a task force to explore suitable options to address these issues. Three proposals I hope you would consider - the first is to include all "mega" industrial farms. I believe an expansion of the CAFO classifications to a "mega" facility with added regulations, public input, and placement restrictions on new facilities. Change the Right To Farms laws to also break these mega facilities out from traditional farming to protect the integrity of the law while also addressing the industrial type facilities that cause more impact to the community, waterways, air, roads, etc.

I believe with the population base that we have, industrial facilities are imperative. However, they are more closely related to industrial rather than traditional farming. It seems an abuse for these industrial type facilities to take harbor under the right to farm and CAFO laws that allow them to develop on any agricultural land with little regulations/permits. Most of their buildings will fall under ag exemption and bypass a permit/inspection process. I do not believe they should be allowed in higher population areas - or in areas expanding rapidly. Considerations must also be made to water, rivers, roadways and other areas of impact.

Location is the most critical piece.. would you put an adult shop next to a middle school? Clearly a bad idea and one that would be very controversial. How is that different from putting a mega industrial facility next to a main river and water source for a large portion of our State? Why allow them in close proximity to rapidly growing bedroom communities near our state capitol? My suggestion - allow but regulate more because their impact is significantly greater. Just one of the 12/13 barns would fall into the large CAFO category, clearly a new level needs to be established.

The issue is quite complex and I would like to suggest a quick read of the OIG report on industrial contracted farming. Most of the chicken processed now in our country is done through contract farming. I believe adding a "middle man" allows for programs, grants, funds earmarked for small and independent businesses to benefit billion dollar companies. Small business loans are a great example the OIG report clearly explains the debacle created when these types of loans are used. It begs the question - what other "goodies" are they receiving that was intended for a small farmer or business owner. Another benefit to the corporation/processor is removing the risk of liability, regulations, violations, etc.

Further studies show that many contracted farmers have taken out large loans to comply to the building requirements from the processors. Since the loans are secured by the contract, if it is not renewed it puts the landowner at risk of losing their property. The option to sell to a different processor is generally not an option as most of the processing facilities have closed or been consolidated under these large corporations. This leaves the business and buildings essentially worthless. Farmers should have the ability to independently grow their food and sell to a source of their choosing. They will need independent processing facilities to make that change.

The impact to communities is great. It would take many smaller traditional farms throughout the community to produce what one of these industrial facilities can. Previously, traditional farms hired many within the community and purchased their supplies locally, the industrial farms are fully automated and require less than a handful of employees. The industrial farms generally provide all feed sources and other supplies. While some traditional family farms go under contract, there are more investor type's who do not reside at the facility. National food security is of concern when so few control all and farmers are being displaced.