

## Pig Business' '6 Big Asks' Explained

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To see the documentary *Pig Business*, go to

[http://www.pigbusiness.co.uk/the\\_film/](http://www.pigbusiness.co.uk/the_film/).

Press resources for *Pig Business* are at:

<http://www.pigbusiness.co.uk/press-resources/>.

### Pig Business' '6 BIG ASKS'

1. **Recognise** that the profitability of factory farming depends on externalising its true costs onto the broader community.
2. **Ensure** the Common Agricultural Policy post 2013 moves European agriculture away from industrial livestock production to sustainable, humane and autonomous forms of animal husbandry.
3. **Ensure** better enforcement and strengthening of the existing EU Directive on the welfare of pigs.
4. **Introduce** mandatory method of production labelling.
5. **Introduce** a ban on routine prophylactic use of antibiotics.
6. **Ensure** national and EU public bodies source only locally or nationally produced high welfare pork.

1. **Recognise** that the profitability of factory farming depends on externalising its true costs onto the broader community.

The documentary *Pig Business* is the journey of mother and eco-campaigner, Tracy Worcester, who set out to discover who was paying the true price for the cheap imported pork found in supermarkets. The film charts the rise of factory farms in the USA and the spread of the intensive farming model into Europe. Tracy discovers how the system is creating farms that are often operating below legal welfare standards – maintaining practices that cause widespread misery among the animals – threatening human health with toxic waste and overuse of antibiotics, and destroying rural communities by forcing traditional farmers out of business.

In the film Robert Kennedy Jnr explains that these are 'externalised' costs which the intensive farm companies do not pay themselves, but which are borne instead by the suffering of the animals, sickness of local residents, pollution of the environment and the breaking up of rural communities. If these costs were paid by the intensive producers their meat would no longer be 'cheap' and higher welfare farms would out-compete them in the market.

The recent discovery that oil contaminated with dioxins has been mixed with pig and poultry feed reveals the weakness of a system which relies on supplies of animal feed from the global commodity market. It was this unregulated open market system which led to the BSE (mad cow) crisis in the UK when unusable residues from meat processing were fed back to cattle. Although thousands of pigs have been killed because

of the current dioxin scare and many countries have banned pork imports from Germany, it is not known if contaminated meat has reached the market.

See our press release for more information on this issue:

<http://www.prlog.org/11207866-germanys-food-safety-scandal-symbolises-the-true-costs-of-industrialised-farming.html>

Other reports about the dioxin scandal can be found at:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/cap/brussels-disappointed-german-response-dioxin-crisis-news-501155>

<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,14761797,00.html>.

Residues of antibiotic resistant bacteria have also been found in pig meat. One survey found that 11% of meat surveyed was contaminated with MRSA. The food must be thoroughly cooked to destroy the bacteria.

For more information, see: <http://www.mrsaquestions.com/11-dutch-pork-is-contaminated-with-mrsa-bacteria>.

In many countries the untreated pig waste is sprayed onto fields which often become saturated. The waste then finds its way to lakes and the sea causing toxic algae blooms which kill enormous numbers of fish and marine organisms. It also leaches down to the water table causing unsafe levels of nitrogen which can cause blue baby syndrome. For more information, visit:

<http://www.thepigsite.com/swinenews/22105/farmers-blamed-for-seaweed-overgrowth-in-brittany>

<http://www.alexandracousteau.org/current-expedition-blue-planet-2010/gulf-states-tennessee-river-valley/hog-farms-likely-culprit-mill>

Pigs produce ten times as much faecal waste as humans so, with tens (often hundreds) of thousands of pigs in these sheds, there is a huge amount of waste emitting a cocktail of gasses (including ammonia, hydrogen sulphide, mixed with antibiotic resistant bacteria and organic particles) from the shed ventilation shafts, from the storage lagoon, and from the fields on which the solids are spread or the liquid sprayed.

About 25% of workers in US pig factories suffer permanent lung damage, usually through chronic asthma or bronchitis. Because the atomised sewage drifts downwind, neighbours of factory pig farms suffer running and burning eyes, sleeplessness, anxiety, respiratory and neurological diseases and depression.. (See interview with Dr Zbgniew Halat in *Pig Business*.)

For more information on the risks to workers see:

<http://www.healthobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37389>.

For more information on the risks to neighbours see:

<http://iatp.org/healthobservatory/library.cfm?refID=37388>.

In March 2010 a court in Missouri ordered a Smithfield Foods subsidiary to pay local residents \$11 million for "odours so offensive that they defied description," said Stephen A. Weiss, a New York attorney who represented the families. He continued, "These corporations have chosen to invade traditional family farming communities and construct industrial operations that simply fail to respect the community and the land." For more information on the case, visit:

<http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=33414>.

The factory farm companies rely for their expansion on the elimination of competition from traditional farms. Typically an industrial pork producer which aims to dominate a market first captures control of the slaughter capacity in a region. This vertical integration allows the industrial producer to control the whole process and to make its profit by selling finished meat products. This means it can pay very low prices to other pig breeders, who do not have slaughter capacity, and put them out of business. Says Robert Kennedy Jr in *Pig Business*, 'The destruction of the small farm wasn't casual it's systematic. It is the intention, it is the way they make money, it's the design of this industry.'

*Pig Business* describes how Smithfield Foods, the biggest factory pork producer in the world, moved into Poland in the 1990s, drawing on a taxpayer guaranteed loan of \$25m from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development that further facilitated a loan of \$75m from private banks. Along with 21 former state farms, Smithfield bought Animex, valued at \$500 million for \$50 million, in a deal that Joe Luter, former CEO of Smithfield, boasted to his shareholders cost them '10 cents in the dollar'.

In a speech at the Hay Festival in 2009, Robert Kennedy Jnr. explained how Smithfield persuaded the Polish Government to close down the small local abattoirs, allowing Smithfield to dominate the slaughter capacity in the country. At the same time it successfully lobbied the Polish Government to redefine pig waste from sewage to fertiliser which meant they did not have to treat the waste from the pig factories but could 'cheaply' dispose of it by spraying it onto fields.

Poland's rural communities of small mixed family farms, who have been providing safe wholesome food for generations, are now breaking down. Villages and market towns which relied on small farms for their economies and social structures are now emptying as people are driven off the land and into low-paid jobs in the ever bigger towns and cities. The European Commission promise to restore payments to small farmers, has come too late for those who have already been bankrupted by the onslaught of the foreign-owned giants like Smithfield.

Some Polish producers took hold of what looked like a lifeline from Smithfield, a short term contract to raise Smithfield pigs from weaning to slaughter weight. But there were some snags. Under Smithfield's terms the contractor doesn't own the pigs, but he does own the manure and has to dispose of it, an almost impossible task to carry out legally. The contract also allows Smithfield to lower the price they pay for raising the pigs without notice. All too often the price paid doesn't cover the loans the contractor took out to build the new barns insisted on as part of the Smithfield deal. The ensuing bankruptcy of the contractor allows Smithfield to buy the barns for a song and further increase their monopoly of pork production.

**2. Ensure** the Common Agricultural Policy post 2013 moves European Agriculture away from industrial livestock production towards sustainable, humane and autonomous forms of animal husbandry.

The sustainability of smaller, independent farms derives from them not being completely dependent on feed imported onto the farm. Pigs raised outdoors have land to root on, and smaller farms often grow some or all of their feed. In contrast, intensive farms rely on soya much of which is imported from South America where it is grown on cleared rainforest or ploughed-up Cerrados, a unique and diverse ecosystem which is being destroyed at the rate of 10,000 hectares every day to feed European livestock. The factory farming system's reliance on shipping soya from countries 8,000 miles makes it vulnerable to oil price hikes and to the volatility of the commodity market.

At the moment in Europe we are seeing a crisis in the pork industry because of high feed prices and reduced consumer demand resulting from of the ongoing scandal of oil containing highly toxic dioxins having been illegally mixed with pig feed. The pigs in the factory farming system are on a conveyor belt and it is

impossible to stop production. This has resulted in the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Ciolos approving grants to producers to cover the costs of storing pork until the price goes up.

See the following article for more information: <http://www.farmersguardian.com/home/livestock/eu-ministers-agree-crisis-aid-for-pig-farmers/36730.article>

In the UK, consumers are already leading the move towards high welfare products, typically from smaller UK farms where pigs are reared to RSPCA Freedom Food higher welfare standards indoors, or are raised outdoors and are allowed free range over fields or have Soil Association organic certification. Sales of RSPCA certified Freedom Food pork, sausages, bacon and cooked ham have increased by 64 percent in a single year. This reflects increasing concern for animal welfare among consumers, many of whom have changed their shopping choices after having become aware of the horrifying realities of factory pig farming through, amongst others, the *Pig Business* campaign.

Independent farming has more flexibility than the big industrialised units which are tied into a process that is almost immune to changes. For instance, the industry was granted several years to prepare for a partial ban on sow stalls because it complained that shorter notice would damage them financially. In contrast, an independent farmer with a mixture of livestock, poultry and crops, can alter his herd size, grow pig feed if required, keep or sell the baconers when the market is right, and in the meantime rely on another part of his production to earn his living.

Pigs that are outdoor reared also form a vital part of the nutrient cycle as they root around the land breaking up old leys and fertilising the ground with their manure. For a small farmer manure is a valuable resource, not 'waste' as factory farms describe it.

But what has ruined so many small pig farmers in the UK is not being able to compete with imports of 'cheap' pork which has been raised in conditions that are illegal in the UK. As David Cameron said at the Oxford Farming Conference in 2008, 'Just as we don't accept cars that aren't meeting our emission standards, so we shouldn't accept food that doesn't meet our welfare standards.'

Even though redressing this issue is now in his power, his government has done nothing but bow to the needs of big business to compete in an increasingly cut throat global economy. For food security and sovereignty, food production should come out to the global economy.

3. **Ensure** better enforcement and strengthening of the existing EU Directive on the welfare of pigs.

The factory pig companies can save money by breaking welfare laws. For example, the law in the EU demands that pigs must be provided with straw or similar manipulable material (to enable the animals to engage in their natural behaviours), but this is not compatible with the slatted floor system of waste disposal and so is ignored by the majority of factory farms.

Similarly, EU law says that tail docking must not be carried out routinely, but first the cause of the tail biting must be addressed. This provision is widely ignored and unenforced across the EU. Tail biting can be reduced by giving straw or similar material to the pigs as the law requires. It is a requirement of Common Agricultural Policy subsidies that EU Directives are complied with, and non-compliance is supposed to result in reduction of the subsidy payments, but this provision is not being used effectively.

Compassion in World Farming has produced a report which found that in five European countries between 70% and 100% of farms visited were failing to obey the EU Pig Welfare Directive which requires that pigs are

given straw or similar material, and are not routinely tail docked. For more information see:  
[http://www.ciwf.org.uk/includes/documents/cm\\_docs/2010/e/eu\\_pig\\_farming\\_briefing\\_jan\\_2010.pdf](http://www.ciwf.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2010/e/eu_pig_farming_briefing_jan_2010.pdf).

In January 2013 the long awaited ban on sow stalls is due to begin, although it is not a complete ban – factory farms will still be allowed to abuse the pregnant sows by confining them in narrow metal cages known as ‘sow stalls’ for around two months a year, and will also be allowed to keep them in farrowing crates in which they cannot turn around for a further two months a year. So even after the ‘ban’ the breeding sows will suffer inhumane confinement in metal cages for a total of four months a year. In a so called free trade economy, the rules are simply ignored by farmers struggling to compete with imports from countries with cheaper labour. Even as the ban is about to be enforced, factory farmers in Italy are building new sow stall systems.

#### **4. Introduce** mandatory method of production labelling

Across the EU there is no information on package labels that tells consumers whether pork was raised on a factory farm, in spite of a 2005 survey that found that 74% consumers believe they can improve animal welfare by their purchasing behaviour. As consumers become increasingly aware of the cruelty that animals endure in factory farms, they need proper labelling which would allow them to avoid low welfare products.

The best that the previous and present UK governments have come up with is a voluntary code for country of origin labelling, which, when it is complied with, at least tells consumers if the pigs have been raised in the UK which has banned sow stalls. However, the UK still allows sows to be kept in farrowing crates for five weeks each time she has piglets. UK consumers who want to avoid factory farmed pork have to rely on Outdoor Reared, Outdoor Bred Free Range or Organic labels.

#### **5. Introduce** a ban on routine prophylactic use of antibiotics

There is growing concern that the routine use of antibiotics in factory farms is leading to the proliferation of antibiotic resistant bacteria which threaten human health. The Pew Commission Report on Industrial Agriculture is a comprehensive indictment of the system and is backed by extensive science and research and can be read at: <http://www.ncifap.org/>.

The factory farm system relies on the routine use of antibiotics to prevent disease spreading quickly through the overcrowded barns. To accelerate growth, piglets are weaned early, at about four weeks, before their immune system has had a chance to develop, and without antibiotics many would die. Approximately 50% of all antibiotics used in the UK and 64% of all antibiotics used on farms are given to pigs. All but one of these are the same as, or closely related to, medically important antibiotics used in human medicine and are becoming ineffective as more and more disease-causing bacteria become resistant to them.

The European Food Safety Authority has published a review of the science which shows that for certain bacteria, such as salmonella and campylobacter, most antibiotic resistance in human infections comes from farm-animal antibiotic use. Even Smithfield, which is required by law to disclose to its shareholders any foreseeable situation that might affect its profitability, admits that, ‘Scientific studies confirm that non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in farm animals contributes to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections in humans. The World Health Organization identified widespread use of antimicrobials outside human medicine as a “serious concern given the alarming emergence in humans of bacteria, which have acquired, through this use, resistance to antimicrobials.”’

A report just published in the USA confirms that MRSA and other antibiotic resistant bacteria can be spread from animals to humans by flies and cockroaches. The research showed that strains found in the intestines of pigs were the same as were found on flies which can fly several kilometres and can spread the bacteria each time they land on food. The Soil Association said it confirmed their concerns that the overuse of antibiotics on farms puts the health of neighbouring communities at risk.

See the following link for further information: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1350621/Deadly-superbugs-spread-miles-farms-house-flies.html> .

The Soil Association has for many years campaigned against the environmental damage, disease, animal cruelty and loss of rural livelihoods caused by intensive farming. They have submitted objections to a planning application to build a 25,000 pig factory farm at Foston in Derbyshire, which would be by far the biggest factory pig farm in the UK, based on their concerns that neighbours' health would be at risk from antibiotic resistant bacteria. Lawyers for the applicants, Carter Ruck, have threatened libel action against the Soil Association unless they withdraw their objections. This has led to accusations that the threatening letter from Carter Ruck is an abuse of the legal system because it aims to suppress public debate, prevent criticism of factory farming and subvert the planning process.

For more information see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/18/soil-association-libel-pig-farm?INTCMP=SRCH> and <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1348812/Libel-laws-used-silence-pig-farm-protesters.html>

The Soil Association's response to the Carter Ruck letter quotes several current scientific reports on the evolution of antibiotic resistant diseases, how this resistance has been selected for by the overuse of antibiotics on factory farms, and the ways in which bacteria can spread diseases from the farms to people: <http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jc2NofEPKwc%3D&tabid=1272> .

*Pig Business* had similar problems when it was first broadcast in 2009. Lawyers for Smithfield Foods, the world's biggest factory pork producer, which is featured in *Pig Business*, wrote four letters threatening Channel Four with libel action and demanding that sections of the film were removed. Because the UK libel laws place an almost impossible burden of proof on the media when it criticises corporations, the fear of being sued means that important public interest material is not published. However, Channel Four held its ground and the film was broadcast a few months later with only minor alterations. Smithfield has not so far followed up its threats but the chill silenced many media outlets from reporting on the film's expose.

For more information on this subject, see: <http://ukhumanrightsblog.com/2011/01/25/libel-threatens-to-stifle-debate-about-factory-farming/> .

6. **Ensure** national and EU public bodies source only locally or nationally produced high welfare pork.

In the UK, welfare laws are among the highest in Europe, and yet meat is imported from farms in Europe which use methods that are illegal in the UK. The result is that British farmers cannot compete and fifty percent of the UK pig herd has been lost in the past 12 years, farmers have lost their livelihoods and communities have broken up. If public bodies had supported UK farmers by sourcing outdoor or high welfare pork from British farms, those farmers might still be on their land.