

## Pig Business FAQs

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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/in-the-news/press-resources/>.

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### **1. What is the documentary about?**

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.

Robert Kennedy Jnr explains in the film that these are 'externalised' costs which the intensive farm companies do not pay themselves as they should, but 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.

### **2. What are the threats to consumer health from pork that has been produced in industrial pig farms?**

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 BSC (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:

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

and other reports about the dioxin scandal 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>.

### **3. What are the threats to the environment from factory farming?**

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.

<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>

### **4. Are the threats to human health and the environment higher in pig farming than cattle farming?**

Intensive pig farms concentrate animals in barns which emit a cocktail of toxic and noxious gasses including ammonia, hydrogen sulphide, mixed with antibiotic resistant bacteria and organic particles. These gasses cause workers to suffer permanent lung damage, usually through chronic asthma or bronchitis.

Many EU countries permit the waste to be stored in 'lagoons' before being sprayed onto fields. The gasses from the putrid lagoons and drifting clouds of sprayed waste sicken neighbouring communities causing running and burning eyes, sleeplessness, anxiety, respiratory and neurological diseases and depression. (See interview with 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 continues, "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 evolution of the H1N1 virus which caused the world pandemic in 2009 has been traced back to factory farms in North Carolina USA.

See [http://www.ciwf.org.uk/includes/documents/cm\\_docs/2009/s/swine\\_flu\\_report\\_05\\_05\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ciwf.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2009/s/swine_flu_report_05_05_2009.pdf)

## **5. What are the economic problems associated with industrial pig farming?**

Typically an industrial pork producer 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. This in turn leads to the breakdown of rural communities and economies. In North Carolina, twenty years ago, there were many villages and communities, now the villages are empty, the feed stores, the churches and the schools are closed, and the communities broken up.

Robert Kennedy Jnr. addressing the Polish Senate in *Pig Business* says, "Twenty years ago there were 27,500 independent hog farmers in the state of North Carolina. Today, they have been completely replaced by 2,200 hog factories, 1,600 of them either owned or operated by Smithfield Foods. Smithfield controls 85% of hog production in the state, and every factory that is built gets rid of 10 traditional family farmers and replaces those jobs with two or three minimum waged jobs in the plants."

In the UK, welfare laws are among the highest in Europe. For example, in most EU countries, the US and Canada, sows are subjected to permanent confinement in cages so narrow they cannot turn around or lie down properly. This practice has been banned in the UK since 2002 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.

## **6.-Who benefits from this type of production?**

Factory pig farming is concentrated in relatively few transnational companies who comb the globe for good investment climates i.e. countries with the lowest welfare regulations, the lowest environmental standards, the lowest labour costs and the lowest standards of public health. Many EU countries provide factory farm companies with attractive investment opportunities by failing to enforce animal welfare laws.

The companies which are large and powerful enough to lobby for changes in the law can bankrupt their competitors. For example, in a speech at the Hay Festival in 2009, Robert Kennedy Jnr. explained how Smithfield Foods of America gained a monopoly over Polish pork production when the Polish Government closed down the small local abattoirs, allowing Smithfield to dominate the slaughter capacity in the country. At the same time they benefited from the decision by 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 or pay a neighbouring farmer to dump it.

For 5 and 6 see <http://documents.foodandwaterwatch.org/SmithfieldJan08.pdf>

## **7. Who is campaigning against industrial pig farming?**

Hundreds of NGOs around the world are campaigning against the various harmful effects of factory farming. Compassion in World Farming has just completed 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)

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/>.

Waterkeeper Alliance, which was founded by Robert Kennedy Jnr., monitors the waste disposal by the pig factories and has reported numerous infringements of environmental regulations in North Carolina as well as documenting fish kills caused by toxic algae blooms. In 2001, Robert Kennedy and Waterkeeper Alliance filed a court case against Smithfield Foods alleging that they had broken environmental laws in North Carolina. They obtained a settlement in which Smithfield agreed to enhance environmental protections at 260 hog production facilities. See: <http://www.waterkeeper.org/ht/d/Contents/cids/275,1383/pid/201>.

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, UK. Lawyers for the applicants have threatened libel action against the Soil Association unless they withdraw their objections. This move has led to accusations that the letter from Carter Ruck is an abuse of the legal system by using the threat of legal action to suppress public debate, prevent criticism of factory farming and subvert the planning process.

See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/18/soil-association-libel-pig-farm?INTCMP=SRCH>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1348812/Libel-laws-used-silence-pig-farm-protesters.html>

*Pig Business* had similar problems when it was first broadcast in 2009. Smithfield Foods' lawyer 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 suppressed. However Channel Four held its ground and the film was broadcast a few months later with only minor alterations.

See: <http://ukhumanrightsblog.com/2011/01/25/libel-threatens-to-stifle-debate-about-factory-farming>

Since the start of the *Pig Business* outreach campaign, sales of high welfare pork have risen sharply. For example sales of RSPCA certified Freedom Food pre-packed pork products (including fresh pork, sausages, bacon and cooked ham) have increased by 64 percent. This is due to increasing concern about animal welfare among consumers, many of whom have become aware of the realities of factory pig farming through, amongst others, the *Pig Business* campaign.

The *Pig Business Time for Change* Event at the EU Parliament on 9 February 2011, co-hosted by three MEPs including Jose Bove, will support amendments to the Common Agricultural Policy which would guarantee support for independent farmers and enforce and strengthen animal welfare regulations. There will be a screening of the film followed by presentations and a debate which will focus on:

- 1) Recognising that the profitability of factory farming depends on externalising its true costs onto the broader community.

- 2) How the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post 2013 can help European agriculture move away from industrial livestock production to sustainable, humane and autonomous forms of animal husbandry that will curb environmental pollution and human diseases, increase biodiversity and sustain rural livelihoods.
- 3) The need for better enforcement of the EU Directive on the welfare of pigs and for this Directive to be strengthened.
- 4) The need for mandatory of method of production labelling so consumers understand how the meat was produced.
- 5) The need for restrictions on the overuse of antibiotics.
- 6) The need for public bodies to source nationally produced high welfare pork.

### **8.-Why aren't animal welfare laws adhered to?**

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 relieve the stressed animals), but this is not compatible with the slatted floor system of waste disposal and so is ignored by the majority of factory farms. Similarly, the law says that tail docking must not be carried out routinely, but first the cause of the tail biting must be addressed. Tail biting can be prevented 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 or termination of the subsidy payments. This provision is widely ignored and unenforced across the EU. There are EU subsidies offered to farmers who want to return from intensive to extensive farming methods but member states rarely take up this option.

### **9.-How was industrial pork production established in Central Europe?**

See the film *Pig Business* which describes in detail how Smithfield Foods, the biggest factory pork producer in the world, moved into Poland in the 1990s, drawing on a tax payer 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'.

As discussed above, the factory farm system is now in use all over Europe. The highest welfare laws are in the UK, Sweden and Finland, however pork raised below UK standards can still be imported into the UK, undercutting UK pig farmers and putting them out of business.

See:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/06/business/global/06smithfield.html>

### **10.-Is it true that many modern illnesses are caused by the excessive intake of meat?**

This report contains an overview of the industrialisation of livestock production and analyses the incidence of diseases associated with high meat diets:

[http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPHN%2FPHN8\\_04%2FS1368980005000492a.pdf&code=29c4005c8489f77dcc1b3917051f9ad5](http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPHN%2FPHN8_04%2FS1368980005000492a.pdf&code=29c4005c8489f77dcc1b3917051f9ad5)

See also the Soil Association article 'The Big Fat Lie' which reports that, "The UK Cabinet Office acknowledged in 2008 that 'existing patterns of food consumption will result in our society being loaded with a heavy burden of obesity and diet-related ill health and existing patterns of food production are not fit for a low-carbon resource-constrained future'. In 2007 in the UK, 24% of adults, 17% of boys and 16% of girls (under 15) were obese. The costs of treating the consequences of obesity were approximately £1 billion in 2002, predicted to rise to £5.3 billion by 2025. Friel *et al* (2009) found that for the UK population, a 30% decrease intake of saturated fats from animal sources could reduce the total burden from ischaemic heart disease by 15% in disability adjusted-life-years (DALYs), by 16% in years of life lost, and by 17% in number of premature deaths."

The full article can be read at:

<http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=qbavgJQPY%2Fc%3D&tabid=680>

Forty percent of cereals worldwide are grown for animal feed, which is a very inefficient and wasteful way to feed people. Soya for pigs is transported to Europe from Brazil while farmland close to the factories is uncultivated because local farmers have been driven out of business. For more information see: [http://www.wwf.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/changing\\_the\\_way\\_we\\_live/food/livestock\\_impacts.cfm](http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/changing_the_way_we_live/food/livestock_impacts.cfm).