

Pig Business on Capitol Hill Event Transcript – March 11th 2011

Introduction by Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)

Welcome to the American premier of the film Pig Business it kind of rolls off the tongue very easily – “Pig Business”. I am honoured to be here with my friend Bobby Kennedy, whose water keeper alliance was instrumental in challenging the EPA to devise and implement regulations concerning CAFOs. With this troop of dedicated activists and in particular with the Director of the film Tracy Worcester I am proud to have this opportunity to be part of this process that informs America about the indelible impact that concentrated agriculture feeding operations or CAFOs have on our health, the health of animals, health of our environment and the functioning of the economy.

The simple fact that CAFOs are regulated by the EPA and their very operations are governed by the clean water act tells you that the existence of approx. 450,000 CAFOs in the United States has a tremendous impact on our environment. We need to be focused on these excessively large feeding operations not only because CAFOs produce more than 50% of the nation’s food animals thus becoming a primary means of producing meat and dairy products in the country but also because they produce over 300 million tonnes of manure annually, double the amount of waste generated by this country’s entire human population. As a report by the union of concerned scientist pointed out the prevalence of CAFOs has many hidden cost, but most hidden costs associated with CAFOs are linked to the storage and disposal of manure. Animal waste and waste water from CAFOs can enter human bodies from spills, from breaks of waste storage structures, accidents, excessive rain, no-agricultural application manure to crop land. The volatilisation of ammonia in the air is a respiratory irritant and can combine with other particulate matter to cause respiratory diseases. A report released just today from the environmental integrity project states that the air at some factory farm test sites in the US is dirtier than in America’s most polluted cities and exposes worker to concentrations of pollutants far above occupational safety guidelines.

Now we are going to hear throughout this evening’s discussions about the impact on rural communities which bears the brunt of the impacts in the form of water and air contamination but this water pollution also affects our national economy. The Union of Concerned Scientists stated that run off and leaching from animal sources including CAFOs is believed to contribute to about 15% of the nutrient pollution that reaches the Gulf of Mexico creating a large dead zone devoid of fish and commercially important sea food and the same effect as many of us know there has been documented in the Chesapeake Bay where the crab industry has suffered major decline partially caused by CAFOs.

So this is really part of our awareness that brings us here, every person in the audience is here because of our awareness of the damage to our planet that is being done by the

uncaring interests that come together to produce these CAFOs and this film by Tracy Worcester and the participation of Robert Kennedy, Water Keepers and all the other environmental activists and farm activists groups that are here is, I think, is going to help to create and broaden environmental consciousness that will produce the kind of action that will be necessary to bring about the reforms that are so critically needed to repair our relationship with nature, with the animals and with the planet itself.

So thank you very much for being here and at this time we are going to turn to back to our organiser and I am so grateful you could all be here and an honour to serve you and the United States Congress. Thank you.

Tracy Worcester (*Pig Business* Producer & Director)

Hi, thank you so much for coming today, I'm going to speak for two minutes now and then I am going to speak after the film. So having watched the film many people tell me that in the future they will only buy from farms, not factories, however it took along time for me to get this film into the public domain. The reason being that Smithfield Foods, the biggest pork producer in the world and therefore the subject in my film, threatened defamation action on newspapers who published articles on issues exposed in the film. On receiving threats some newspapers actually backed down from publishing their stories out of fear of having to defend expensive libel actions. UK's main stream broadcaster Channel 4 also received a series of threatening letters, saying which sections Smithfield found defamatory. One was an interview of an ex-worker whose doctor's said his lungs were permanently damaged by working in one of these agri-businesses. Although Channel 4 removed much of the material that Smithfield objected to they continued to try and prevent the film from being broadcast. A threatening letter arriving just hours before the film was actually shown and actually Channel 4 showed the film twice and no further communication from Smithfield. We've translated the film into 12 languages and the film has been shown around the world, also in the EU Parliament last week.

So, here after a great deal of legal wrangling and a huge dossier of scientific facts to back up the statements in the film, enjoy!

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (Founder & President of the Waterkeeper Alliance)

Thank you very much. I'm really grateful for the enormous turnout tonight and I'm most grateful for Tracy and her efforts to get this film here. As she said she was bedevilled by legal actions, by threats, by a fear campaign that was mounted by Smithfield Foods, a campaign of intimidation that I'm very accustomed to. Smithfield and the industry had for several years a person who followed me, I do about 60 speeches a year around the country and I had a guy that the hog industry had following me for maybe 5 or 6 years, who came to every event, he sat at the front row he'd wear a black cowboy hat, he

would maintain a website and he would trace my movements and particularly when I speaking in the farm belt, he would signal compatriots that are now the type of people that are part of the tea party movement to show up at my events and sit at the front and wear cowboy hats and bandanas, he recorded every speech that I made for many years. He is not here tonight because he was subsequently indicted for horse theft and fraud in the state of South Dakota. His probation does not permit him to leave the state.

Smithfield also brought a law suit against me in Poland because I went over there and made a speech before the Polish Parliament and debated with the head of Smithfield Foods. I said the same thing in Poland as I said in hundreds of speech around the country to farm groups and to other people on this issue for many years, we had at one point 30 lawsuits by the Water Keepers Alliance against this industry and we were doing annual conventions about this industry for rural communities and family farmers. They had recorded hundreds of my speeches but they never sued me here because everything I said about them was true. In Poland they sued me for libel, which is a criminal offence that carries a two year jail sentence and as I have subsequently learnt in Poland the truth is not a defence for libel. So essentially it's a criminal law that forbids you from saying insulting things about corporations even when they are true.

For a couple of years I had to avoid going to Poland I went there many times.

One of the things that got me really hooked on this issue was that it is a template for all other major environmental issues which we have in this country, whether it is mountain top removal or round up ready corn or mercury poisoning from coal plants. Wherever you see large scale farming entry you'll see the subversion of American democracy, you'll see the disappearance of transparency at the local level, you'll see the disappearance of public participation at the local level, the public is no longer permitted to have a say in the allocation of public trust resources, what happen to the commons in their community, their sovereignty of their community is taken away from the public. You'll see the capture of the agencies that are supposedly protecting us from pollution and you'll see the corruption of government officials because what this industry is, is a criminal enterprise. It cannot produce a pound of bacon or a pork chop cheaper or more efficiently than a traditional family farmer unless they break the law, they cannot function or compete in free market economy unless they violate the laws. In fact in 1996 the Raleigh based News and Observer won the Pulitzer prize for a series of articles called boss hog, which detailed how virtually every relevant politician in the state North Carolina had been corrupted by the hog industry in order to allow this hog industry to get a foot hold, a beach head in North Carolina and once they go that beach head in North Carolina and they were able to drop the price of pork using these corrupt methods and illegal methods from 60 cents a pound to 8 cents a pound when the cost of raising a hog to kill weight is 32 cents per pound for the farmer, so you can't stay in business unless you have a contract with Smithfield, you are out of business and Smithfield was able to go with that and put a gun to the head of ever hog farmer in the state.

When we started this work there were 27,500 individual family farmers, hog framers in the state of North Carolina, today there are 2,200 factory farms, they've been all together replaced 80% of those are owned or controlled by one corporation – Smithfield Foods. So you have the landscapes of America being dominated by corporate power and driving human beings part of their business plan to drive people off those lands. You drive through the state of North Carolina in almost any of the rural states you'll see the ag-ways closed they are boarded up the banks are closed because they don't buy their feed locally, they buy their feed, they bring in 200 truck loads a trip, a train car load filled with feed from the Midwest, that is subsidised feed from the Midwest without which they can't function, it used to be that North Carolina a farmer would have maybe 300 sows on half a section of land, 320 acres of land and he would the grow corn , feed the corn to the sows raise the sows and spread the manure on the land they were basically in a closed loop cycle. Sometimes the rain would come along and wash the manure into the water but he didn't want that to happen as it wasn't any value to him, but if you put 100,000 hogs on that same piece of land, the land can absorb the potassium the nitrogen and the phosphorus and the obnoxious components of hog waste from the 1st three hundred but after that it is just waste disposal and you can't do that in our country legally you cannot dump waste on your land without a permit under the resource conservation recovery act or under the clean air act if you are going to burn it or under the clean water act if you are going to put it in the water.

So you can't just throw stuff away, particularly poisonous stuff in this country.

So in order to do it they had to break the law, and in order to break the law they had to keep it quiet and you know I talk about democracy and the environment being intertwined all the time. We in the state of Maryland we've 200 river keepers, I think 11 of them are on the Chesapeake Bay river keepers. We sued the chicken farmers up and down the Chesapeake and what we learned it was illegal for the state EPA in the state of Maryland to learn where these factory farms were, it is legal for them to keep that information, it is illegal for the agricultural department in the state of Maryland to give information on chicken farms or factory farms in Maryland to the state EPA, it is against the law in the state of Maryland and you think "this is ridiculous, this couldn't be" I will tell you something even more ridiculous, there are eleven states where it is illegal to criticize factory farmed foods in the United States of America. And you say you're exaggerating, but ask Oprah Winfrey, because she did it and she had to go court for six weeks in the state of Texas, she had to broadcast her show from Texas because she was in court there, they are called veggie libel laws but they are really directed towards factory farmed food. There are three states where the legislators have passed law to make it illegal to take a picture of a factory farm or factory farm animal.

So, I talk about the corruption and subversion of democracy and you have people out there talking about the constitution and how much they love it but I don't hear them talking about this. Clearly we have a first amendment in the constitution and we

shouldn't have laws that say you cannot criticize factory farm foods but we have 11 states that have laws that make it illegal to criticize them, why do they do that? What they are doing is so illegal and it is so directly bad for public health, for the economy, for rural communities, for everything for the state that if they knew about it they would shut it down, so they have to keep it quiet and they have to corrupt the politicians who allow this and capture the agencies that allow this atrocity to continue.

I got into this, I started working for Hudson Riverkeeper and we have something started by commercial fishermen on the Hudson river, family owned businesses and there are so many parallels with what happened to them when the big shots came and put them out of business because they had clout. We have a 350 year old fishery on the Hudson River, these were people whose children are now hanging dry wall and pouring asphalt because they can't practice their trade, the same as the family farmers in this country. They are being put out of business you're seeing a kind of corporate feudalism occurring in this country. Thomas Jefferson would say that this was an assault on the heartland of America. This is the final nail in the coffin for Thomas Jefferson's vision of American democracy rooted in tens of thousands of independent freeholds owned by yeoman farmers each with state system of government and now we don't have that. We have Smithfield controlling that farmland in every single state. In Iowa they could have never ever have gotten away with this, they could have never have done this in Iowa but they were able to do it in North Carolina they didn't even want to go into Virginia because they didn't think they could corrupt the politicians in Virginia successfully enough. So they went North Carolina because they thought they could buy off the politicians in that state and once they did it there and they dropped the price of hogs to 8 cents a pound and Iowa had to go along and now 36 states have got this and each one would have lost their hog business and the way Smithfield does it is to go to that family farmer and say you were making money when it cost 60 cents a pound, now you can't make money because it dropped below 32 cents a pound and now 8 cents a pound the only way you can live and stay in business is if you sign a contract with us, Smithfield. We own the facility in the state that slaughters hogs, they went to those farmers and said here is what you can do sign a contract with us, we are going to put a gun to your head so you do it and you build the hog shed called a Murphy 1100, it's going to cost \$200,000, you pay interest on the loan, you have to mortgage your property, put your property up for security, put your family farm up for security, you build that hog shed on your property and you own the hog shed, you have to pay the propane, you have to pay the electricity, you have to pay the insurance, but we Smithfield own the feed and we own the hogs. We deliver the hogs, you raise them our feed, you raise them and give them back and we will pay you \$20,000 a year. It is going to take you 20 years to pay off that hog shed and we will only give you a five year contract, that means on the sixth year we can come back to you and we aren't pay you \$20,000 any more, we pay you \$12,000. If we want to take your land from you because no body else can buy your land but us, because the only thing of value on that land is that hog shed and now the shed has zero value unless you've got a smaller slaughter house where you can bring your hogs, so they own you.

People in this country say you are these are farms and what is a family farms and what's the difference? I'll tell you what the difference is, a family farm is a farm where the people who own it can still make decisions about what to do on that land and when Smithfield owns you that is indentured servitude it is a kind of serfdom that they have in Poland.

I'll tell you what they did in Poland is that they went to Poland and they tried to bribe the Polish legislator I was told by the head of the agricultural ministry in Poland that the head of Smithfield, the second man of Smithfield Richard Paulsen offered him a million dollar bribe and go ahead and sue me Richard Paulsen, a million dollar bribe to change the rules in Poland and here's the rules they wanted to change. In Poland many farms and village has a little abattoir, a little slaughter house and they are much cleaner. We didn't have any *E. coli* when everybody had little slaughter houses because the thing that gets you *E. coli* is because of the line speeds where the animal and the faecal material blended in with the meat. So they Polish Kielbasa, one of the best meats in the world, during the communist time they didn't even have money for pesticides so they had these organic farms all over Poland, small family farms with a couple of cows, a couple of horse, some chickens, some hogs and they'd bring them to the local slaughter house or they'd slaughter them on their property. What Smithfield wanted to do and ultimately succeeded in doing was they went and said, we are going to buy big old communist farms, the communist's factory farms food production, and we are going to buy these slaughter houses, the three slaughter houses. We are going to put special devices in the slaughter houses like when you walk into the bathroom and turn on the pipes and you don't have to touch the faucet when you wash hands in the bathroom. There is a laser in there that you wave your hands in front of so that the water comes down and you wash your hands so you don't have to touch that faucet, you keep your hands very clean. So they said we have these in our slaughter houses let's make a law in Poland that you can't operate a slaughter house if you haven't got lasers in your bathroom. What does that do? It shuts down everyone of these 6,000 slaughter houses they had in Poland so there are only three places you can now slaughter hogs in Poland and it gives Smithfield a chokehold on every farmer in Poland. And this what I went and testified when I went in front of Polish Parliament, because they said and we had a quote on a tape that we are going make Poland the North Carolina of Europe we are going to take Poland, drop the price of hogs to 8 cents a pound in Poland and all the other hog producers in Europe are going to have to do it the way as in the United States.

The reason I got involved in this is because of one of my heroes: Rick Dove. As you know, Waterkeeper Alliance was started by commercial fishermen and we now have 200, but Rick Dove was one of the first- a 27 year Marine Corps vet, a combat veteran in Vietnam and a lifelong republican. His dream was that when he stopped and got out of the military as a General in the Marine Corps, he was going to start a commercial fishing business on the Neuse River by his home there with his son and he was going to open a little fishing store there, where you buy fish and the like.

In 1993, a billion fish died in the Neuse River and they were covered in pustules and lesions and Rick started seeing these pustulating lesions and he started losing his memory and he found out that all the fishermen on this river were getting the same thing. And he found out that it was down to a microbe called *Pfiesteria piscicida*, the cell from hell, which was fairly unknown to science, but suddenly it proliferated anywhere there was hog industry. It causes permanent brain damage in people, we have interviews on film with fishermen who can't even tell you how to get to their own homes- they've got permanent brain damage from this and it comes from the hog industry and Rick Dove, you stand up for a second (APPLAUSE) and all the other Waterkeepers here, you all stand up (APPLAUSE). Rick Dove traced this effluent upriver and found it was coming from this industry that no-one had ever heard of, because they did things so quietly- they'd go to neighbourhoods where there were a lot of minorities and they didn't need to explain themselves and they went to those isolated rural areas and built this industry.

Hogs produce 10 times the faecal material by weight as a human being. One of Smithfield's facilities in Utah has 850,000 hogs, which means that one facility produces more sewage, more faecal matter by weight every day than the whole of New York City combined and there's no difference between human crap and hog crap in terms of how noxious it is. NYC has 14 sewage treatment plants, I've been to every one of them, they cost \$2.5bn each. If Smithfield had to build anything like that to treat its hog waste, as we've heard before, the price of pork would go up to about \$75 per pound and they'd go out of business.

So the only way that their product can compete against traditional family farmers is by breaking the law, because they're not going to be able to make it at \$75 per pound of pork. So that's what they do, they break the law, they spread the manure on the ground and then it goes into the waterways and kills the fish. It sickens the people who live nearby these hog farms and their property values plummet. It turns neighbour against neighbour in rural areas and eventually you get clearances.

Part of the plan of these businesses is to simply empty the rural landscapes of the United States of America and turn them over to the corporations. I see this in other areas too; I see it in West Virginia, in Kentucky, all over the country. They are emptying these areas so they can take over these places and liquidate them for cash. And I think we're not protecting our environment for the fishes and the birds, we protect it for our own sake, because we recognise the dangers to our communities and if we want to meet our obligations as a generation, as a civilisation, as a nation, we need to create communities for our children that give them the same opportunities for dignity, richness, opportunity, good health, the possibilities bestowed on us by our parents' generation.

We need to do this by protecting our environmental infrastructure- the air we breathe, the water we drink, the wildlife, the fisheries, the common land, the public wealth.

These should not be susceptible to private property ownership- they are the assets of the whole community. The rivers and the public lands connect us to our past, to our history that provide context to our communities and that are the source, ultimately, of our values, our virtues and our character as a people.

That's what Tracy's been fighting for, that's what all the Waterkeepers have been fighting for, and that's what this fight is about, it's about preserving the value system of a nation that's supposed to be an exemplary nation and one that in the past has been an exemplary nation, but is quickly turning away from that proud past.

We need to understand the free market capitalism in this country- the free market is the greatest economic engine ever devised, but it has to be harnessed to a social purpose, otherwise you end up with the feudal plutocracy of the same nature and cruelty as the plutocracy that caused our European ancestors to flee to the United States.

We are turning back into that in this country with this unsheathed corporate power that looks at the great green landscapes of our country and sees cash and profit and you see the big polluters and their indentured servants in the senate and the congress; their slick PR firms and their phoney think-tanks, that claim they are about creating free market capitalism, but really they are creating and providing the philosophical underpinning for unregulated corporate profit taking.

And their phoney scientists, their tobacco scientists, their biostitutes that are spouting this mantra that 'ooh, we have to choose between economic growth and prosperity on one hand and environmental health on the other hand' and that is a false choice. In 100% of situations, good environmental policy is identical to good economic policy and this is how we should be measuring our economy- on how it produces jobs and the dignity of generations and how it preserves the values of the assets of our community.

If, on the other hand, we want to do what Smithfield foods want to do which is to treat our country as if it was a business in liquidation, convert our natural resources into cash which would have a few years of pollution based prosperity, we can generate spontaneous cash flow and the illusion of a prosperous economy, but our children are going to pay for our joyride. And they're going to pay for it with denuded landscapes and poor health and a huge communal cost that will amplify over time and we're going to be left with a nation that we are not going to be proud of. So we must fight this corporate power that is destroying the things that we value and the things about this nation that we're legitimately proud of.

Michael Greger (Humane Society of the United States)

I grew up, next the largest hog factory west of the Mississippi. I could see first hand—I could *smell*, first hand, what these kinds of operations can do to communities. Images, cannot convey the overpowering nauseating stench. There must be pet-lovers in this audience. You know, scoopin' the litter box, pickin' up after your pooch, what a small pile of animal excrement smells like. Or if you got a big dog, maybe it's a two hand job. But now imagine, an entire lake of excrement. It's like something from a Bosch painting. Millions of gallons of raw untreated sewage just out in the open.

Imagine waking up every morning with the realization that your quality of life depends on which way the wind happens to be blowing that day. Whether or not you can even go outside that day. That's one of the reasons I went on to study agriculture, and then, medicine. Because, it turns out, how we treat animals in general can have global public health implications.

The AIDS virus, for example, has been traced to the bushmeat trade in Africa. Someone butchered a chimp a few decades ago and now 25 million people are dead. The emergence of SARS and the live animal markets. The spread of monkeypox and the exotic pet trade. In fact, many of humanity's great scourges—smallpox, influenza, measles—arose from our domestication of farm animals.

Now, 10,000 years later, a new wave of animal-to-human diseases is cresting the species barrier. Farm animals were domesticated millennia ago, but never before like this. The advent of factory farming represents the most profound alteration of the human-animal relationship in 10,000 years. And no surprise, perhaps, that factory farms have been shown repeatedly to be breeding grounds for disease.

2005, the emergence in China of the deadliest strain ever of *Streptococcus suis*, causing meningitis and deafness in people handling infected pork products. The World Health Organization blamed its emergence on factory farming.

Pig factories in Malaysia birthed the Nipah virus, one of the deadliest of human pathogens, a contagious respiratory disease causing relapsing brain infections and killing 40% of people infected, propelling it onto the official U.S. list of bioterrorism agents. It's emergence blamed again, on factory farming.

In 2008, a strain of airborne ebolavirus was discovered in factory farmed pigs in the Phillipines.

In 2009, MRSA, the multidrug resistant "superbug" now killing more people than AIDS every year in the United States, was found colonizing half the pigs tested in Iowa. And later that year, scientists detected MRSA in the retail American pork supply—right off supermarket shelves.

And in 2010, the death toll from the swine flu pandemic was collated. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 12,000 Americans died. Most of them young people.

And these examples were just like in the last 5 years, and just talkin' about pigs. I don't have time to even touch on all the other new diseases killing people linked to factory farming—mad cow, bird flu—we are in a new age. It used to be: look, if you don't want to get a factory farm disease, don't live next to a factory farm and don't eat factory-farmed meat, but now things are different

As I knew all too well growing up, communities plagued by factory farms have been found to suffer higher rates of miscarriages, because of pollution of the groundwater, higher infant mortality and asthma rates among schoolchildren because of the air pollution—the noxious gases released by all the putrifying waste. This week is actually the one year anniversary of an \$11 verdict against Smithfield for sickening people in Missouri with 83 million gallons of liquid hog waste—the largest such verdict in U.S. history.

But now, with a disease like swine flu, it doesn't matter where you live. Doesn't matter what you eat. A disease can emerge on a factory farm and spread around the world in a matter of days, weeks. So when families in Jackson County, Missouri, or villagers in viokovich Poland standup to factory farms like Smithfield it's not just about the residents of those communities, we should all care about how those animals are raised. In the very least International Development institutions need to stop promoting these systems in the developing world, because not, no matter where we live, we may all suffer the effects.

So, the decisions we make at the supermarket can have wide-reaching implications. Or even better, at the *farmer's* market—check out freshfarmmarket.org, there's dupont circle, crystal city, foggy bottom, H st. Penn Quarter, Silver Spring, one by the White House. freshfarmmarket.org. We can vote with our wallets, vote with our forks, and, vote at the ballot box.

The Humane Society of the United States has, in coalition with some of the great groups represented here, launched ballot initiative campaigns in half dozen a states in recent years to ban the most abusive factory farming practices. We've won every single one so far. We've won banning these gestation crates for pregnant pigs; banning veal crates for calves; banning battery cages for egg-laying hens. In California. we won by a landslide 27 point spread. We won rural counties, we won agricultural counties. We got more yes votes than any other initiative in California history.

When people learn what's really going they're outraged. When they're empowered to affect change, they make the right choice, over and over, by a wide margin. That's why even a whiff of putting-it-to-the-people-for-a-vote gets the industry groups clamoring

for a compromise, like we hammered out in Ohio. Gets legislatures all across the country from Maine to Michigan, Colorado, Oregon to pass laws to end some of these factory farming practices for good.

We even went back to the state I grew up in, Arizona, and faced off, head-to-head, with the very factory farm that so affected my childhood. And by the citizens of that state, that factory farm was soundly defeated.

When animal protection groups lock arms with sustainable ag groups, consumer organizations, producers, environmentalists, religious leaders, business owners there is no limit to what we can achieve.

On a federal level, the new farm bill's coming up. While Congress is in a fiscal discipline mood, how about eliminating the billions in taxpayer handouts to make cheap animal feed and high fructose corn syrup, or how about redirecting those subsidies to level the playing field and support farmers markets, community supported agriculture, organics, grass-fed animals, pasture production—even, fruits and vegetables.

There are some glimmers of hope. Last month the House considered the Blumenaur amendment to cap these Big Ag subsidies. Didn't pass, but only went down 241 to 185 with real bipartisan support,

And today, is a historic day. PAMTA, the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act was reintroduced today by Representative Slaughter. Most antibiotics produced in the United States don't go to treat sick people, but instead are fed to farm animals just to accerate their growth or prevent disease in such stressful, overcrowded, contaminated conditions found on factory farms. This legislation to restrict the mass feeding of antibiotics to farm animals is endorsed by 377 organizations including American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and every major human medical and public health organization in the country. And only opposed by the likes of the National Chicken Councilthe, National Pork Producers, the United Egg Producers, the American Sheep Industry Association. The contrast could not be more stark.

The only reason there continues to be even be debate on this issue is that the public health community is going up against not one, but two of the most powerful lobbies here in the beltway—not just agribusiness, but the pharmaceutical industry as well, that makes the drugs. That's why we need your help.

What can you do right now? Tonight. Right now the USDA is accepting comments on a legal petition we filed to close the loophole on downer veal calves. After our investigation of that dairy cow slaughter plant in California, which led to the largest meat recall in history, the Obama administration banned the slaughter of cows to sick to even stand from the federal school lunch program and across the board, but exempted

calves. So there's still a financial incentive to continue to drag to slaughter veal calves who can't even stand up. The deadline for comments is April 8th, 30 days from today.

If you live in Maryland there's a state bill that Big Ag is trying to ram through to codify unsafe and abusive practices and make the foxes even more in charge of the hen-factory. That's senate bill 254; house bill 676—if you want any of this information, who to contact, how to contact. Email me.

mhg1@cornell.edu. That's mhg just the numeral one at cornell.edu. I can send you a copy of the landmark Pew Commission report on Industrial Farm Animal Production. I'll even mail you a free copy of my swine flu DVD if you send me your mailing address. Please don't hesitate to contact me anytime for anything.

In closing: Yesterday, the National Pork Board officially changed their quarter-century old slogan from "Pork: the other white meat," to "Pork: Be Inspired." For once, I agree with the pork Board. I hope the film tonight inspired you to work for a more humane, healthy, and sustainable food supply.

Thank you all for coming.

Kathy Ozer (National Family Farm Coalition)

I'm going to be really brief and I'm not talk about the next farm bill. There is a farm bill that is going to be debated and right now we are in the midst of a budget fight and we are still in a situation of trying to implement the last farm bill.

At the end of the film that event in Ankeny, Iowa, was an event that we helped organise and was on the eve of the first Department of Justice and USDA hearing. There were five events across the country, thousands of people came out and it was the first time we had the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice looking at the issues of concentration in the food supply system, from farms issues around livestock, hogs, seeds, and what was happening with dairy. One of the things that we most want to see happen is action around those hearings. Those hearings were the outcome of Members of Congress raising these issues during the last farm bill. In particular, Senator Feingold questioning the old Department of Justice anti-trust division, saying there is a serious problem and its hurting farmers and its hurting consumers. I would like to say briefly about other issues that were raised at that town hall meeting. Two of those three farmers were here on Monday, Barb who was moderating and spoke, and then Larry Ginter who spoke. They were here in Washington on Monday speaking to their Senators urging action on some of these same issues. These are people who are on the farm, who are in a position of potentially loosing their farms because we've had such a rollercoaster of prices. We haven't had a situation where farmers (whether their grain

farmers, livestock farmers or any kind of farmer) are able to recover the actual cost of production. I really appreciate Robert Kennedy's statement of just how critical it is for farms to be paid a fair price. What goes into the system and how there has been such loss of control. It's that loss of control that we have been fighting really hard to try and reverse and to have farmers be in a position, themselves, their cooperatives, and their communities to be able to be clear about what needs to take place. Not just in this Country, but for farmers around the globe. The policies here in the US (and in this Capital where we are right now) have a major influence of what happens for family farmers wherever they may be. Because of the efforts of so many in the food system to keep prices artificially low and to externalise those costs throughout the whole system. That rally that took place was in 1999. That rally (where farmers Helen Waller who spoke, and others who were there) was right after a 'Farm Aid' concert with Willie Nelson. It was in the very place we are sitting, as this used to be a grassy knoll where we used to have rally's and events, and now we have a visitors centre - which is good, and hopefully we can have more events like this. That rally involved a mini march from right across the street at the Methodist building with Neil Young. It was one of the first times that a concert directly then did a lobby action, and we did it two years in a row. It was also the launch of the 'Farmer to Farmer' campaign on genetic engineering, being really clear that farmers want to be able to make decisions not to use GE crops and not to be purchasing GE seed. We are on the verge of some really serious issues on that around GE alfalfa.

At that very time in 1999, was a few months before the WTO in Seattle and also a few months before the collapse of hog prices (that went down to 8 cents per pound). That was the same time that one of the groups that we work with (The Missouri Rural Crisis Center) launched 'Patchwork Family Farms'. It was a model of being able to show that family farmers could retake control, establish a fair price so that when all the other farmers in the area were unfortunately having to go out of business and take these unfair contracts from Smithfield and from premium standards and other companies (its not just Smithfield, they have brought up a lot of other companies now), that they were able to ensure a fair price for those products. When hog prices from Missouri farmers were 28 cents a pound, Patchwork producers received no less than 43 cents per pound. Those same farmers are in business today because of being able to creatively come together and reassert their control and role in the market. The other issue that Rhonda Perry mentioned was the need to suspend the loans. Our governments subsidise guaranteed loans. They are going to, just for the expansion of poultry and hog contract facilities. 25,000 people petitioned Secretary Vilsack, we did lots of public events, and unfortunately no action has been taken on that. Some states have limited who's getting the credit, but that was an issue we thought we could have won. We thought it was an easy issue. It was suspended in 2000 by Secretary Glickman, and no action has been taken on that.

A point about Smithfield making campaign contributions. They don't only make campaign contributions, but right now they are a member of the American Meat

Institute, they are a member and part of other coalitions and they are actively working these halls of congress, trying to defeat a major part of the last farm bill. Which is what we call the 'livestock rule' which for the first time in decades would give more control back to farmers and ranchers and poultry growers. Instead, they are spending lots of money lobbying against fairness and against the major proposal. As an immediate action we need to find to hold onto what we have won. We need to make sure we have good rules and good regulations by our government to make sure there is some more fairness in this system and from there we can build on the next farm bill.

I really appreciate everyone being here. One other issue is that Smithfield is out to try and pass unfair trade agreements. Right now they are pushing hard on Korea, on Panama and Columbia, and we need to work together to make sure we have no more unfair NAFTA type trade deals.

Bev Eggleston (Virginia Pig Farmer, EcoFriendly Foods)

I am really honoured to be here in this panel today. My family comes from North Carolina, for four generations. I have been inside facilities much like the Smithfield plants you saw in the film tonight. I didn't eat meat for more than a decade after that because I decided to dedicate my life to raising happy pigs. Then I launched EcoFriendly foods to create a new model for growing and processing livestock that had the entirely different bottom line. We have been in business for 10 years now and my name is on Restaurant menus up and down the east coast. This means a lot to me. It signals that there is a personal story attached to the product. That eco-friendly foods is something special and ought to be acknowledged. I wish what I was doing down in Virginia wasn't seen as something so unique. I wish every rural community had a network of dedicated farmers that raised animals humanely and sustainably. I wish there could be hundreds of dedicated small packing plants like our processing facility which process locally grown livestock. I know that big agriculture, the business of raising livestock conventionally isn't going anywhere. But big ag doesn't deserve the only seat at the table. I understand that conventional agriculture is essential to our overall food production system, but there are downsides to large scale productions that I believe can be offset only by the development of a parallel food system, like the consortional food model we have pioneered at eco-friendly. Whatever your feelings are about big-ag and the subsidies that support the system, it is undeniable that it feeds many people at prices made possible only by economies of scale. But many Americans are growing increasingly concerned about the hidden costs of conventional agriculture. They worry about the toll of modern farming that is taken on the environment, our water, land and energy resources. They are demanding something different. They are demanding a food production system that is a smaller eco foot print that provides greater choices in the market place and directly benefits the local farmers who are sustaining our rural economy. The current recession has hit many of us really hard and it is especially difficult for those living in rural America. Creating a sustainable parallel food system is

not simply a personal choice, it is the only proven path to rural economic renewal. The commitment to breed, pasture raised and humanely raised animals within an alternative system is both time and labour intensive. But the demand for our products has proven the benefits to our rural communities is unquestioned, and healthy foods are produced, jobs are created and the communities are revitalised. Admittedly, the challenges involving building an alternative food production system are daunting. Many nights I've laid awake wondering why I am doing this and when is it ever going to pay off. And then I think about my farmers. Then I also think about my chefs and some of my farmers market customers. These people are the ones that give me the confidence that our mission is succeeding. That the eco-friendly model is working. But I know how hard it was to blaze a new trail. The path for the next generation of farmers to grow this system we've helped pioneer needs to be made easier and if we want to sustain the positive impact that alternative agriculture systems have already made. For eco-friendly foods to make the next step to replicate this into a small parallel food system, we need peoples support. And we need that support to be reflected in congresses actions. First, we need easier access to investment capitol, collateralised debt obligations, credit default swaps, mezzanine warrants. Bankers respond to those words. Small farms, alternative agriculture, entrepreneurs, local food production, not so much. Access to investment capitol is imperative if we are going to expand a food system that sustains small farmers and maintains agricultural diversity. One of USDAs primary missions by the way. You know, whether the capitol comes from extended loan guarantees or providing seed money, it is a decision that smarter people than I will have to make. What I know is that once the pump is primed and fresh capitol is injected into the local initiative, it will create new jobs and drive economic prosperity. It will present one of the most cost effective ways that congress can sustain healthy economies and healthy ecosystems. From the beginning eco-friendly foods has survived without federal handouts. We are not jostling for the support place of the government trough. We just want access to capitol needed to expand and grow the model we have built. We have proven that it can provide market access, farmers such as ours will expand there operations. It is a matter of supply and demand and we know our customers want better tasting meat raised locally and sustainably. Access to capitol is the catalyst that makes it possible to meet the demand. Second, Congress needs to help in the irregularity arena. In many ways the USDA does an admirable job with its meat and poultry inspection program, but in my experience and in my opinion the agency could be improved in a way that it oversees smaller processors. The federal inspection system is designed to expect large scale food production. Many of its regulations are arbitrary, capricious and all expensive for small operators such as eco-friendly foods. In our view, regulations need to be adopted to accommodate smaller operators. Not to compromise food safety or lower health standards. On the contrary, we are referring to the right size regulations for the size and the scale of the establishment being inspected. USDAs current system of 'one super-size fits all' just doesn't work. It imposes a crushing economic burden on smaller processors without a tangible benefit. Congress needs to ensure that USDA has the authority to level the playing field. Smaller producers and processors need to sit at the table. We don't want to be reliant on government handouts to keep us going. We can

and will succeed through our own initiative and hard work if we have a fair chance to compete. We believe the private sector will come to our side, if we have a fair chance to compete.

In summary, I know the challenges facing the parallel agriculture sector are significant. But the benefits are even greater. Creating rural jobs, expanding sustainable food productions and supporting judicious use of our resources we all now know are very limited. The see the model that eco-friendly foods has built as nothing less than a new blueprint for rural economic development that will foster positive change for all Americans, from the rural family field, to the family dinner tables.