CAFO - Confined Animal Feeding Operations

It is time to change “business as usual” in the treatment of farm animals

In addition to depriving people of their basic human right to safe food and a healthful environment, raising livestock in confinement is inherently inhumane for farm animals. Too many animals are crowded in spaces too small to allow humane treatment. During a recent visit to Poland, I had an opportunity to visit a World War II Nazi concentration-extermination camp near Lublin. The rows of barracks, where people awaited the gas chambers, reminded me of the rows of chicken and hog houses that now dot rural Iowa and much of rural America. There are no humane concentration camps. The fact that something is legal doesn’t make it ethically or morally right. It’s time to change “business as usual” in the treatment of farm animals.

JFAN and other anti-CAFO community organizations invariably support farmers who share the traditional values of true “family farmers.” They also support the new pasture-based, free-range, organic, humanely raised, and other approaches to sustainable animal husbandry.

There are many such economically viable alternatives to CAFOs, and more are emerging with growing public concern about CAFOs. These farmers apply manure in quantities that can decompose naturally and fully used as fertilizer by growing crops. These farming systems naturally produce more nutritious foods and don’t require routine antibiotics because the animals stay healthy. These family farmers respect the rights of their neighbors, treat their animals humanely, and are committed to caring for the land, air, and water for the benefit of future generations. These farmers know it’s time to change “business as usual” - and they deserve our support.

To meet the new challenges, rural people do not need to rely on public relation gimmicks; they need only tell the truth about CAFOs. We will eventually win the hearts and minds of the people by simply telling the truth, even if this isn’t the “usual way to do business.” CAFOs must be either effectively regulated or eliminated and replaced with real family farms. In the meantime, people in rural communities must do whatever is necessary to protect their basic rights to a healthy environment - including taking legal actions against government agencies or CAFO operators whenever their communities are threatened. It’s time to change “business as usual.”

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