

# WILL FAMILY FARMERS BE HOG TIED?

**The BSE crisis in the beef industry has focused attention on our meat production system like nothing before. The decade-old images of British cows staggering, shaking and falling helplessly still haunt us.**

At the root of the “mad cow” crisis is the imperative of an industrialized food system – maximize production and minimize costs. This is the imperative that leads to the feeding of animal by-products to animals of the same species.

Most of the meat in grocery stores today comes from chicken factories, giant beef feedlots, fish farms, and mega hog barns. And though the risk of catching the human form of mad cow disease is small, each person whose life has been affected by this tragic and entirely preventable disease has suffered far beyond what most of us can imagine.

Canada’s pro-factory farming policies promote meat and livestock exports. Canada’s meat industry is already tightly linked to the American meat industry. Our regulations and production systems are synchronized with theirs. One consequence of this is that Canada cannot export meat to Europe, where environmental and animal welfare standards are higher. If the Canadian government were to raise regulations in Canada to European levels, it is possible that the U.S. would interpret them as non-tariff trade barriers and launch a potentially costly NAFTA challenge.

Canada’s factory farming system is designed to deliver cheap meat to integrated agribusiness corporations in Canada and the United States. In fact, hogs have been selling for about \$20 below cost per pig due to excessive production by factory farms. This system hurts family farmers who lose access to the market, rural residents who face air and water pollution by factory farms, consumers and taxpayers



Photo: Bill Ross

whose federal and provincial governments provide support for factory farmers, and ultimately the environment and future generations.

Rural and urban communities are coming together to fight factory farming through the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition. The Council of Canadians is a key member of this coalition.

In Ontario, the government is being asked to place a moratorium on the construction or expansion of any hog operations. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick are other key areas where factory farming activists are organizing to stop factory farms.

Citizens in Quebec have already won an extended moratorium while their Liberal government designs a framework for sustainable hog production that puts family farms, health and the environment first. Federally, we need to have a sustainable agriculture policy - not a cheap food policy that off-loads environmental, social and

economic costs onto the rest of us in order to line the pockets of the industrial agribusiness sector.

To find out where you can buy non-factory farmed meat, how you can help raise awareness in your community, or to join the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition, go to [www.beyondfactoryfarming.org](http://www.beyondfactoryfarming.org).

Check out two recent books that give an excellent analysis and insight into factory farming:

**Beyond Factory Farming: Corporate Hog Barns and the Threat to Public Health, the Environment, and Rural Communities**, published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, can be purchased for \$19.95 plus shipping and handling. Contact [ccpasask@sasktel.net](mailto:ccpasask@sasktel.net) or call (306) 978-5308.

**Plaidoyer pour une agriculture paysanne: Pour la santé du monde**, published by Ecosociété, is available for \$19.00. Contact [ecosoc@cam.org](mailto:ecosoc@cam.org) or call (514) 521-0913

**Cathy Holtlander is the Project Organizer, Beyond Factory Farming, for The Council of Canadians. She can be reached at or 1 877 955-6454.**