



How to Leave Industrial Agriculture Behind



Photo: Simun Ascic/Shutterstock.com

by Olivier De Schutter and Emile Frison | Food Tank

Contrary to what we often hear, it is not a lack of evidence holding back ecological alternatives in food systems. It is the mismatch between their huge potential to remedy the problems caused by industrial agriculture, and their much smaller potential to generate profits for agribusiness firms.

Many of the key problems in food systems are linked specifically to industrial agriculture: uniform crop monocultures relying on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and industrial feedlots (the infamous 'CAFOs') that use preventive antibiotics and generate major pollution problems.

The evidence is now overwhelming: industrial agriculture is a key contributor to the rampant biodiversity losses now threatening the 35 percent of global crops dependent on pollination, the degradation of some 20 percent of global

land, the 30 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions arising from food and farming, and many other negative outcomes in food systems.

Thanks to the work of campaigning groups and scientists, these problems are now increasingly understood. However, we are much less familiar with a set of equally important facts and figures about the potential of ecological farming to remedy these problems.

The report released by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) synthesizes the growing evidence on this front, for example:

- A 30-year study shows that average organic yields are generally equivalent to conventional agriculture, and 30 percent higher in drought years;
- Total outputs in diversified grassland systems are 15-79 percent higher than in monocultures;
- Resource efficiency is 2 to 4 times higher on small-scale agroecological

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David Sykes Resigns from JFAN Board; Diane Rosenberg Appointed President

With his litigation practice expanding, attorney David E. Sykes resigned as president and board member of Jefferson County Farmers & Neighbors, Inc. (JFAN), announces the JFAN Board of Directors. The JFAN Board is pleased to announce Executive Director and Vice President Diane Rosenberg will succeed Sykes as JFAN president. Sykes will continue as JFAN's legal counsel on a pro bono basis.

Sykes operates a busy environmental litigation legal practice representing Iowans adversely affected by concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). The mission of JFAN, a 501(c)(3) educational foundation, is to educate the public on factory farming issues, and its activities continue to increase locally and statewide. To avoid the remotest sense of a conflict, Sykes and the JFAN Board of Directors jointly agreed for Sykes to step down from his active Board of Directors participation with JFAN. Sykes' resignation was effective March 15, 2016.

A founding member of JFAN, Sykes

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JFAN NEWSLETTER

JEFFERSON COUNTY
FARMERS & NEIGHBORS, INC

Volume 18 ~ SPRING/SUMMER 2016

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**All articles are written and reported
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This newsletter is published
semi-annually by the
Board of Directors
of Jefferson County Farmers
and Neighbors, Inc. (JFAN),
which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit
tax-exempt educational foundation.

JFAN

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was appointed president in June 2014 after the retirement of former president Jim Rubis. Under Sykes' direction, JFAN further expanded and intensified its activities including the creation of a more powerful and comprehensive two-mile warning letter package. JFAN also developed an ongoing quarterly ad series that runs in the *Fairfield Ledger* and *Fairfield Town Crier*, expanded its Board of Directors to 14 members, and released a strong position statement addressing CAFO expansion in Southeast Iowa.

Except for a brief hiatus in 2010 to serve as legal counsel to plaintiffs in the Pleasant Plain CAFO case, Sykes was a dynamic member of the JFAN Board of Directors since its inception, providing an exceptional combination of legal expertise and awareness of factory farming issues. He was instrumental during early efforts to stop CAFO expansion from taking hold in Jefferson County and, as legal counsel for neighbors in the Pleasant Plain lawsuit, was a key player in their attaining a satisfactory settlement against CAFO owner James Kaska.

"In just two year's time, David gave JFAN an enormous boost with his vision, energy, and his unflagging dedication," says Rosenberg. "He's a true warrior who understands the importance of standing up to an industry that causes unbearable suffering to many Iowans. We were fortunate to have him lead JFAN, and we are equally fortunate that he will continue on as JFAN's legal counsel."

Rosenberg easily steps into her new role as JFAN's president. "As Executive Director, Diane already employs strong leadership within JFAN. Her deep knowledge of factory farm issues combined with her communication skills, vision, and enthusiasm makes Diane uniquely qualified to lead JFAN," says Sykes.

A JFAN board member since 2007, Rosenberg was hired as its Executive Director in 2009. She's a strong advocate for

extending JFAN's relationships and influence both within Jefferson County and throughout the state. Locally, she works closely with neighborhood groups threatened by infringing CAFOs. Her communications and event organization background is a natural fit for JFAN's community educational program that spans publications, social media, and major events such as the JFAN Annual Meeting.

Rosenberg is actively involved in networking with organizations throughout Iowa, forming alliances with a wide cross section of national, state, and community groups opposed to factory farms. She also serves as a consultant with the Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP), a national organization that

supports communities throughout the US facing a CAFO threat. Her work with SRAP gives JFAN access to a greater range of resources for addressing the factory farming issue in Jefferson County.

Recognizing that JFAN has something to offer other communities, Rosenberg developed a daylong training program and guide to teach other county groups how to form a similar organization as JFAN's. She and JFAN Board Member Francis Thicke also developed a detailed training program to analyze manure management plans. To date, she has conducted numerous training sessions with communities around Iowa.

"Rosenberg has an acute sense of our present situation and how JFAN must expand to meet the threat of the growing pork industry. I'm completely confident that she will continue to lead JFAN to greater accomplishments," says Sykes.

Rosenberg will continue as JFAN's Executive Director. JFAN Board Member Bob Walls will assume Rosenberg's former positions of Vice President and Treasurer. Walls, President of Sky Factory, joined the JFAN board in 2014 and serves on its Education Committee.



Diane Rosenberg



David Sykes

Water Pollution Trading: Paying To Pollute Our Waterways

By **Scott Edwards**
Food and Water Watch

In 1972, in response to the nation's worsening water quality, Congress passed the Clean Water Act (CWA), landmark legislation to curb pollution impairing rivers, lakes and streams across the United States. The CWA turned our waterways around by requiring many polluters to get permits that limited their discharges by requiring industries to install state-of-the-art technologies. The ultimate goal of the CWA was to eliminate water pollution over time as new technologies came on the market to address industrial water pollution.

By making polluters limit, measure and reduce their waste, the CWA has dramatically improved the quality of countless bodies of water. But now a complex and unaccountable market-based, pollution trading system is being quietly introduced across the country, undermining the CWA, endangering waterways and drinking water, and threatening our communities.

In a fundamental shift away from the tried and true CWA approach, water pollution trading allows industries to avoid installing technologies that reduce pollution and, instead, buy pollution "credits" from other sources that may or may not be controlling their own discharges. By allowing polluters to buy credits to keep dumping harmful discharges into our waterways, trading effectively replaces accountability with avoidance.

Unsustainable agricultural operations – factory farms – are increasingly the most common source of these pollution credits. These facilities are also the biggest source of nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) pollution in our waterways, contributing significantly to massive algae blooms in the Great Lakes, the Chesapeake Bay, the Gulf of Mexico and other water bodies. While the CWA has done a commendable job forcing most industries to clean up their discharges, the agricultural lobby has managed to fend off effective, mandatory control of factory farm pollution.

For example, wastewater treatment plants and manufacturers have to regularly monitor, sample and document their own discharges to ensure that they're not destroying local rivers and lakes; in con-

trast, industrial agricultural operations never have to monitor or sample to protect waterways. And while the CWA requires most other polluters to install

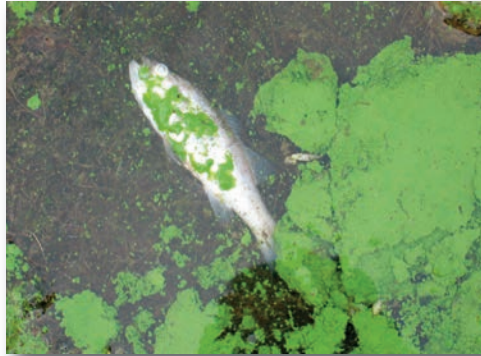


Photo: Jennifer L. Graham, USGS.

pollution reduction controls, factory farm pollution control remains largely voluntary.

The way water pollution trading works is this: one of Iowa's many coal-fired power plant, for example, wants to dump more nitrogen into your local river, but can't do so under the CWA because the river is already impaired and can't handle any more pollution. So the power plant (or pollution credit brokers) goes out to industrial farms and convinces them to install "Best Management Practices" (BMPs) that are designed to reduce the nitrogen pollution coming from the operation. For every pound of nitrogen that a farm might reduce, the power plant gets a "credit" to discharge a pound of nitrogen into your polluted river. Each power plant could use this approach to dump tens of thousand of pounds of nitrogen into Iowa's impaired rivers each year.

The theory is that the net discharge of pollution is still zero because one source reduced its load while another discharged more.

But theory doesn't often line up with reality.

Agricultural pollution reductions are never truly measured or verified; credits are calculated based on modeling and guesswork. When point sources rely on these questionable credits to ignore their own discharge limits, net increases of pollution into local waterways are all too likely.

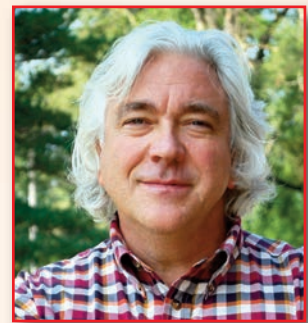
In addition, while installing effective BMPs on farms is certainly important, pollution trading schemes pay Iowa's factory farm polluters to voluntarily take steps they

should be required to take to protect our state's rivers, lakes and streams without profiting off the sale of pollution credits. Pollution trading perpetuates the irresponsible notion that it is OK for factory farms to keep destroying Iowa's waterways unless someone gives them money to stop. It will not lead to the ultimate goal of the CWA: to eliminate water pollution.

The marketplace is fine for widgets, but it has no place in our waterways. By allowing polluters to avoid controlling their own discharges and continue to dump waste into local waterways by relying on credits, water pollution trading schemes threaten the drinking water and public health of Iowa's already-threatened communities. We should all be opposing these pay-to-pollute approaches and demanding that all polluters, including factory farms, be held to mandatory, accountable and responsible standards

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JFAN **Annual Meeting!** **Wednesday, October 26**



BILL STOWE
CEO AND
GENERAL MANAGER
Des Moines Water Works

on
A Fundamentally
Different Way to Address
Iowa's Shameful
Water Quality

OUR ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE:

JFAN Working Hard for You

DNR Consulted with Commodity Groups Early in Rule Making Review

By Diane Rosenberg
Executive Director and President

Every five years, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources conducts a review of all the administrative rules that put into practice laws governing animal feeding operations. This gives the agency an opportunity to revisit how the rules are written and to see if changes should be made that would better fulfill the intent of the law.

The DNR undertook a rules review this year, and JFAN, along with over 20 other environmental and community organizations, reviewed the changes made by the DNR. We obtained a copy of the revised rules package when it was made public this spring. We identified several rules that were weakened by the DNR and several that could be strengthened to better protect people and the environment.

JFAN particularly advocated for changes that would close the LLC loophole, which allows multiple CAFOs owned by one person or company, which are built adjacent to each other to be treated as individual CAFOs if they are put in different LLC names. This loophole enables a CAFO owner to cluster smaller CAFOs and avoid greater – or any – separation distances, as well as construction permits, the Master Matrix, and even, in some cases, manure management plans that are required for larger sites.

JFAN, along with several sister organizations, encouraged public participation in the rules review process, either by attending a public hearing or sending in written comments in support of stronger rules. Over 1000 comments were received from around the state, and over 50 people attended the public hearing in nearby Ainsworth on May 31, including many JFAN supporters.

It was during this time that I had a conversation with the Executive Director of the Socially Responsible Agricultural Project who pointed out that in some states, various stakeholders, including environmental and community groups, are involved early in the process for these

types of reviews. She encouraged me to find out if it might still be possible to participate in that way.

During the first public hearing on May 23 in Des Moines attended by JFAN and other like-minded organizations, most comments were made in support of a stronger set of rules. It was during the comment period that I remembered a statement made by Eldon McAfee, legal counsel for the Iowa Pork Producers Association (IPPA), during the Iowa Pork Congress in January.

In his session addressing nuisance lawsuits, Mr. McAfee alerted pork producers that a revised DNR rules package was coming and that the changes weren't so bad. It dawned on me during the public hearing that the DNR had provided IPPA with the rules package months earlier and that they apparently had pulled in some stakeholders early in the process. Only it appeared they limited invitations to commodity groups.

I pointed this out, calling for community and environmental groups to also be considered an active partner since we represent people most affected by factory farms. Other meeting participants jumped in and peppered the DNR with further questions, pushing Bill Ehm, Animal Feeding Operation Division Administrator, to admit that commodity groups not only reviewed but also weighed in on the rules before any of us saw the package.

Mr. Ehm said the public hearings were our chance to comment, but that didn't satisfy anyone. When Mr. Ehm admitted that the commodity groups would have an opportunity to weigh in again on the changes that were made following the comment period, he eventually agreed to allow our organizations to do so as well.

The DNR will be preparing a responsiveness summary that will go to the governor's office for final approval before it goes to the Environmental Protection Commission for adoption. JFAN is in touch with Mr. Ehm, and other organizations are also monitoring the DNR for the release of the responsiveness summary so we can review the final changes. The

EPC is expected to review the rules package at their September 20 meeting.

JFAN published a letter to the editor in *The Des Moines Register* and the *Fairfield Ledger* respectfully demanding the DNR include environmental and commodity groups as equal stakeholders in any rules review process, since we speak for the well being of lowans and land stewardship. We also signed onto a group letter addressed to DNR Director Chuck Gipp, along with 20 other organizations including municipal water utilities and organizations. The letter called out the injustice of how the rules review was conducted and demanded that we all be included stakeholders in such a process. There has been no reply to this letter.

Several groups are looking further into the rules review process. We will keep you updated with new developments.

Several CAFOs Proposed for Jefferson County

Applications for three new factory farms were submitted for Jefferson County this year and two additional were proposed for over the border in Washington County. Because of the LLC loophole that allows an individual or company to put confinements in different LLC names, two of the CAFOs are skirting around a construction permit and Master Matrix required for larger, expanded facilities.

CAFOs in Jefferson County:

JAB Pork, LLC: A 2480-head confinement legally owned by Jennifer Deutsch is being built in on 140th Street in Packwood. This is directly adjacent to Deutchland, USA, another 2480-head CAFO owned by Robert Deutsch, an apparent relative of Ms. Deutsch. We understand Mr. Deutsch approached several neighbors informing them that he was constructing a second confinement at that location. Had this been under Mr. Deutsch's name, it would have been considered an expansion requiring a construction permit and Master Matrix.

The CAFO is located within two miles of 69 families. JFAN sent out a notification letter, but was not contacted by any of the neighbors.

Diehl Pork Site 2 – Hawk Farm: Tracy Diehl, owner of Diehl LLC is constructing another factory farm adjacent to Casey Diehl Section 36, a 2400-head confinement owned by her husband on 159th

Boulevard in Penn Township. Ms. Diehl's confinement adds another 2480 hogs to the area.

Under the Common Ownership definition regulating factory farms, a husband and wife would normally be considered joint owners and this second building would be regulated as an expansion, not a separate confinement. However, in 2013, when Mr. and Mrs. Diehl built two 2480-head CAFOs side by side on 167th Street in Buchanan Township, the DNR told JFAN that the couple set up an LLC in Mrs. Diehl's name, providing her with less than 50% ownership. The majority ownership was put in a relative's name. Common ownership only applies when both spouses maintain a 50% or more share in the ownership of each LLC.

This is another case where a construction permit, Master Matrix, and greater separation distances are avoided because of the CAFO owners using the LLC loophole.

At press time, JFAN sent out a notification letter to 55 families but has not yet been contacted by any neighbors. We also filed a formal complaint with the DNR asking them to check the current ownership of Diehl, LLC to ensure no ownership changes occurred since it was first incorporated to provide Mrs. Diehl with majority ownership. Mrs. Diehl still holds less than 50% ownership

Larry Angstead 50/50 Site: Larry Angstead is proposing a 2480-head hog confinement for Quince Avenue in Buchanan Township in a neighborhood with 92 families within two miles. This is Mr. Angstead's third CAFO in Jefferson County – he has two others in Round Prairie Township, one of which was constructed in 2015.

The CAFO is close to a development of homes and a daycare facility. In this case, numerous concerned neighbors reached out to JFAN for assistance. A meeting was held with several neighbors in June, after which they contacted Mr. Angstead to discuss their concerns. Mr. Angstead met with the group and invited them to visit a CAFO he operates in the Stockport area so they could experience the lack of odor. However, several neighbors reported to JFAN that an unpleasant odor was present at the Stockport CAFO.

The neighborhood group is looking into some options for addressing the confinement. JFAN continues to provide informational guidance and support as needed.

JFAN Editorial

Do You Live in Rural Iowa? This Could Be You

By Diane Rosenberg | Executive Director and President

Iowa laws on animal feeding operations only regulate facilities that contain 1250 hogs or more. Yet a 1200-head hog confinement can have a detrimental impact on neighbors. With our current laws, rural residents have no protections from hog concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) literally being sited at the end of their backyard. This picture shows just how close a CAFO can come.



This factory farm was constructed less than 200' away from this neighbor's home in Washington County. The family has spoken to JFAN about their distress, but there are no laws prohibiting a confinement this size from being sited so close to a residence, business, school, religious institution, or public use area.

Separation distances apply only to CAFOs larger than 1250 or more hogs. The distance depends on how large the CAFO is and whether it's sited near an incorporated or unincorporated area.

Separation Distances for Hog Confinements			
From 567, Chapter 65.11 (455B) Chapter 6 of the Iowa Code			
Number of Hogs	Residences, Businesses Churches, Schools		Public Use Areas
	Unincorporated Areas	Incorporated Areas	
Up to 1249 hogs	None	None	None
1250-2499 hogs	1250 feet	1875 feet	1875 feet
2500-7499 hogs	1875 feet	2500 feet	2500 feet
7500 or more hogs	2375 feet	3000 feet	3000 feet

All confinements regardless of size must adhere to set distances from water source, again depending on the type of water source. For example, a major water source requires a 1,000' set back distance, but other water sources only require 500.' The DNR designates major water sources in the Iowa Code Chapter 65.

In addition, no manure management plan is required for factory farms under 1250 hogs, and the community won't know where the manure will be applied until they see a truck applying in the neighborhood. It's conceivable that raw, untreated hog sewage may be applied right next to neighbors' property lines as well or on land that is already receiving the maximum amount of manure from another factory farm.

Neighbors like the one depicted in this photograph have very little protection with current Iowa laws. Separation distances and manure management plans should be in place for all factory farms regardless of the size. We need our legislators to consider the morality of ignoring this gap and act quickly during the next legislative session to change such a blatant loophole and to safeguard vulnerable rural residents.

NEWS BRIEFS

FROM IOWA, THE US AND BEYOND

CAFO Proposed in Allamakee County “Worst Place”

A 2499-head hog confinement was approved on July 28 for one of the most environmentally sensitive areas of Iowa even though DNR Director Chuck Gipp himself acknowledged the unsuitable location and the agency asked the owner to retract the application.

Churchwood LLC proposed by Reicks View Farms, a large corporate supplier, would be constructed in an area of shal-



Photo: Jonathunder

low bedrock and sinkholes called karst. In the case of a manure spill, runoff, or even manure application to a field, manure could easily seep through the porous rock down into the area's pristine waters. The terrain is steep, and the CAFO and fields designated to receive manure are near two streams containing natural reproducing trout.

“The DNR has many concerns on this site, even though it appears to meet current regulations,” wrote Tom McCarthy, DNR Senior Environmental Specialist in the agency's approval letter. Several specific concerns were outlined including the risk of flash flooding and the emergence of sinkholes at any time. McCarthy also called out the history of Reicks violations.

“Reicks View Farm and its many associated LLCs at times have difficulty timely applying manure from it's 50 plus sites in several Iowa counties. Notices of Violations for MMP record keeping, manure overflow from buildings, manure separation distance violations, and manure spills

have been noted.”

“A manure spill or leak at this site would have the potential to do great environmental damage to the groundwater and surface water,” wrote McCarthy.

“The DNR requests that Churchwood voluntarily retract this current application for a 2499 head swine facility.”

The original CAFO was for 7,499 hogs and would have required a permit, but the DNR told owner Dale Reicks that the site was unsuitable as designed. Mr. Reicks responded by moving the building up a hill and reducing the number of hogs to 2499 hogs, one less than the threshold that would require a permit and Master Matrix. Given the environmental sensitivity of this area, the DNR's engineer and geologist did a full review of the construction permit, something that doesn't normally occur in a CAFO containing fewer than 2500 hogs.

DNR Director Gipp admitted the inappropriateness of the site during a visit to Allamakee County this spring commenting, “If we couldn't refuse that one on the basis of geology, then there is no place that we can refuse,” reports the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*.

The Socially Responsible Agricultural Project is working with the Allamakee County group, Friends of Village Creek, to review the professional engineering plan and manure management plan (MMP). All the fields are highly sloped with one field averaging a 48% slope. Slopes over 7% are considered steep; the rest of the fields in the MMP range between 12-16%.

Reicks View Farms is also trying to build a 26,000-head hog confinement in the Bayfield, Wisconsin area, another pristine environment on Lake Superior. Community members have mounted an intense campaign to stop the confinement and have so far been able to stall its development.

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CAFOs in Washington County

Cody Sobaski Brighton Hogs and Cody Sobaski Site 2: In the Brighton area, Cody Sobaski is building two confinements approximately a mile apart in Clay Township. One CAFO is just across

Report: Poultry Industry Limits Bathroom Relief for Workers

In what is called a “clear violation of US workplace safety law,” an Oxfam report reveals that workers in the nation's chicken slaughterhouses are routinely denied regular bathroom breaks, reports *Mother Jones*.



Photo: Shutterstock.com/Picsfive

According to the Oxfam report, “Supervisors mock their needs and ignore their requests; they threaten punishment or firing. Workers wait inordinately long times (an hour or more) then race to accomplish the task within a certain timeframe, (e.g., ten minutes) or risk discipline.”

This echoes a 2013 Southern Poverty Law Center report of poultry workers that found 79% of workers participating in the survey were not allowed to take needed breaks.

To address the problem, the Oxfam report says that workers wear adult diapers to work, “restrict intake of liquids and fluids to dangerous degrees; they endure pain and discomfort while they worry about their health and job security.”

The speed of the 140-bird per minute kill line is blamed for the problem, says Oxfam. “Supervisors deny requests to use the bathroom because they are under pressure to maintain the speed of the processing line, and to keep up production. Once a poultry plant roars to a start at the beginning of the day, it doesn't stop until all the chickens are processed,” says the report.

Several companies are named in the report, including Tyson's, Perdue, Sanderson Farms, and Pilgrim's.

the street from the Jefferson-Washington County border and the other is approximately 1/3 mile north of the county border.

JFAN sent notification letters to 108 neighbors of these CAFOs, including residents of Pleasant Plain and Washington County; no residents have reached out to JFAN for assistance.

Report: Tyson #1 Water Polluter Among Agribusinesses

By Environment America

BOSTON, MASS. – Tyson Foods, one of the world's largest meat and poultry producers, dumps more toxic pollution into the nation's waters than any other agribusiness, and produces the most animal manure of five major companies assessed nationwide, according to a new report.

The Environment America Research & Policy Center study documented pollution from Tyson and four other major agriculture conglomerates, responsible for an estimated 44 percent of the pork, chicken, and beef produced in the U.S.

"When most people think of water pollution, they think of industrial pipes spewing toxic chemicals," said John Rumpler, senior attorney with Environment America and author of the report. "But this report shows how, increasingly, corporations like Tyson are turning farms into factories and ruining our rivers and bays in the process."

Agriculture is the probable cause for making more than 145,000 miles of rivers and streams across the country too polluted for swimming, fishing, drinking, or maintaining healthy wildlife, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Based on available livestock production data, today's report calculates that

Tyson's supply chain alone generates more than 55 million tons of manure per year — manure that too often ends up untreated, ultimately fouling rivers, streams, and drinking water.

One example cited in the report: When



Photo: Larry Rana - USDA

chicken manure contaminated two sources of drinking water for Tulsa, Oklahoma, Tyson and other poultry processors agreed to pay the city \$7.5 million.

Gabby Cammarata, a Salisbury, Maryland resident who joined Environment America on a call with reporters to discuss the study, is worried a proposed Tyson facility near her home could cause similar problems for her community's drinking water supply.

The 3.1 million chicken factory farm

"would be placed right on top of the underground aquifer which supplies all of the drinking water to the city of Salisbury and the town of Delmar," Cammarata said. "There's a real risk that manure could enter into our water table and ultimately our aquifer. Like most rural communities, our drinking water treatment system isn't up to the task of dealing with all that pollution."

From slaughtering plants run by the company or its subsidiaries, Tyson discharged over 20 million pounds of toxic pollutants to the nation's waters in 2014 — more by volume than even Exxon Mobil or Dupont — according to data the company reported to the federal Toxics Release Inventory. Most of the company's toxic discharges are nitrates, which are linked to blue baby syndrome and some forms of cancer.

In Iowa, nitrate pollution from agribusiness operations have so badly polluted the Raccoon River that the Des Moines Water Works is now suing three counties for failing to stop contamination of its main drinking water source.

In addition to those of Tyson Foods, Environment America examined pollution records for:

REPORT *continued on p. 8*

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**Thank you for all you do
to support JFAN!**

LEAVE BEHIND *continued from p. 1*

farms;

- 15 percent more biodiversity has been found in diversified agriculture, and 30 percent more wild species on organic farms;

- Organic meat and milk provide around 50 percent more beneficial omega-3 fatty acids than their conventional equivalents.

To suggest that agroecological farming can improve on the outcomes of industrial agriculture is to understate the case. Agroecological systems are showing major potential to keep carbon in the ground and to restore degraded land – questions to which industrial agriculture has failed to provide any sort of answer. Nor is there a trade-off with food security, as has often been assumed.

In other words, claiming that there is no alternative to industrial agriculture is no longer viable in 2016.

However, as indicated at the outset, the facts alone will not suffice. The way food systems are currently structured allows value to accrue to a limited number of actors, reinforcing their economic and political dominance, and thus their ability to set priorities in food systems.

Power imbalances can no longer be a footnote in discussions about food systems reform.

Identifying these power imbalances and how they lock industrial agriculture in place is just as important as showing the positive impacts of agroecology.

For example, the way we define food security and the way we measure success in food systems tends to reflect what industrial agriculture is designed to deliver – not what really matters in terms of building sustainable food systems. Measuring the yields of specific crops, or productivity per worker, tends to favour large-scale industrial monocultures and to under-value the benefits of alternative systems. These include higher total outputs taking all crops cultivated in combination; greater resilience to shocks; more diversity resulting in improved nutritional quality; and the provision of ecosystem services on and off the farm.

Other barriers arise from the way decision-making takes place. For example, agricultural ministries, committees, and

lobbies retain a privileged position relative to other constituencies (e.g. environment, health) in setting the priorities – and allocating the budgets – for policies affecting food systems more broadly. Meanwhile, increasingly privatized agricultural R&D programs remain focused on the handful of crop commodities for which there is a large enough market to secure significant returns.

In other words, the solutions offered by industrial agriculture have been able to remain at center stage, even as the need to reconcile productivity growth with other concerns has been increasingly recognized.

Food systems can be reformed and refocused around diversified agroecological systems. Indeed, change is already happening. Industrial food systems are being



Photo: Amanda Slater, Flickr

challenged on multiple fronts, from new forms of cooperation and knowledge-creation to the development of new market relationships that bypass conventional retail circuits.

However, if these initiatives are to emerge beyond the margins, the vicious cycles keeping industrial agriculture in place must be broken. IPES-Food has identified what some of those steps might look like. In particular, we must address the political economy of food systems: who decides, on the basis of which information, and under which set of influences.

There is no single script to be followed: the pathways to agroecological farming and sustainable food systems will take a variety of forms. That, after all, is inevitable, once we recognize that the steps towards diversified agroecological farming are steps to democratize decision-making and to rebalance power in food systems.

IPES-Food's first major report 'From

Uniformity to Diversity: a paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems' was released June 2, 2016. See the executive summary and full report on foodtank.com.

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- The Brazilian meat giant JBS, with over 45.8 million tons of manure and over 37 million pounds of toxic pollutants over a five-year period;
- Minnesota-based private company Cargill, a major cattle producer, with 39 million tons of manure annually and over 50 million pounds of toxic pollutants over a five-year period;
- Chinese-owned Smithfield Foods, based in Virginia, which claims to be the world's largest hog producer, with over 18.9 million tons of manure and 27 million pounds of toxic pollutants over five years; and
- The chicken-producer Perdue Farms, based in Maryland with over 3.7 million tons of manure and 27 million pounds of toxic pollutants over five years.

The Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP), who joined Environment America to release the report, said the solutions to curb agribusiness pollution — such as buffer zones, reduced concentration of livestock, and hauling waste out of endangered watersheds — are feasible and well-known to the industry.

"I raise my cows on rotational pasture to help keep our waterways clean," said Terry Spence, a Missouri farmer who consults with SRAP. "Companies like Tyson should do the same."

"These corporate agribusinesses have the knowhow and the resources to implement better, more sustainable ways of producing America's food," concluded Rumpler. "It's time to hold them accountable for their pollution of our environment — just as Americans a generation ago did with industrial polluters."

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