

“We are Concerned Fulton County Farm Bureau Members.”

March 3, 2017

Fulton County Farm Bureau
Attn: Bill Carlberg, President
15411 N State 100 HWY Ste 1
Lewistown, IL 61542

Dear Fellow Farm Bureau members,

We are writing to you as proud Fulton County farmers who have tilled this land for many generations, scratching out a respectable living for our families. All of us have been through some good and bad times trying to sustain our family farms. We have endured. Now, we are faced with a challenge anew, one that threatens the sustenance of our families, our land, and our communities. Livestock factories have come to the country – our country – at the hands of venture capitalist investors. These investors lack patriotism, with no sense of loyalty to their country, nor duty to sustain the land. They care not for the generations of tomorrow. They seek profit, regardless of the cost. They make their money from feeding China. And why not? These investors largely come from afar: other states, and even other countries.

Yet we are expected to quietly succumb our inalienable property rights, and reduced values of our land and homes. We are expected to stop caring about future generations on our farms – their capacity to maintain their property values, and more basically, their access to clean water and air.¹

As farmers committed to our families and futures, we see such demands as unconstitutional. Further, we see them as violating the Farm Bureau’s logo. It appears the Bureau’s logo, “Farm. Family. Food.” is being unwisely revised: “Food First. Farm. Family.” Farm Bureau Policy Development states: *“A resolution...a policy...a law...an ordinance ...each one starts with YOU...a farmer with needs, concerns and a desire to voice these thoughts. That’s where Farm Bureau steps in. We listen and help you tap into local, state, and national efforts.”*²

Here, we present our concerns frankly to you. As longstanding Farm Bureau members, we are stunned that the Farm Bureau has not listened to our concerns and others voiced from our fellow farmers across the state. The Bureau ought to provide leadership by editing the Illinois Livestock Management Facilities Act to protect the local, family farmer and society as a whole. The eight criteria for siting approval neglects the Illinois Public Health Department, numerous other state agencies, and perhaps most starkly of all, local state-governmental involvement. Indeed, should we not be able to govern ourselves and protect our rights as farmers who actual live in the countryside, rather than investors who do not?

The issues are clear. The evidence of water, air and soil pollution are on record, as well as alarming health statistics and new concerns such as deadly antibiotic resistant superbugs. Rachel Carson’s words rings as relevant today as they did over fifty years ago: “Of all our natural resources water has become the most precious...In an age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival...³”

In our home county, the investment company Professional Swine Management has taken root. PSM piles corporations upon corporations to skirt liability for the pollution that their massive hog facilities produce.⁴ Memory Lane Acres Limited Liability Corporation and Runway Ridge Farms LLC are corporate hog confinements proposed nearby where we farm. These sites rest on top of one the world’s largest water

supplies, the Mahomet Aquifer. And since the track record for PSM reflects leaching and pollution, we are faced with the potential for one of the most disastrous calamities.⁴ One earthquake, one tornado, one carelessness and one's best intentions are all for naught. History will repeat itself. The tainted water supply partly caused by CAFOs in counties north of Des Moines, IA, provides full proof that Mother Nature's Law of Compensation is in full effect. Untreated animal wastes sliced into the soil are washed away by steady, runoff rains. Over and over, plants and soil are saturated until burnout.

And who ends up paying the costs? Eventually, all of us do. But right now, the costs fall most heavily on us. We are expected to sacrifice the value of our property, the sustenance of our land, and our clean air and water. These massive factories have little place in the future of our countryside. One thing is for sure: these facilities are the answer for no one – not farmers, not rural people, and not hungry people. We need an agriculture that works for everyone.

Man's inhumanity to man, for a buck, makes us furious. It is alarming. We ask: where is the Golden Rule? Perhaps the Bureau's slogan, "It Starts with YOU" is correct. We appeal to your decency and your foresight to act not only on our behalf, but also on yours. This model of livestock production has a nasty way of destroying all that is near and far to you: the communities you care about, the land you farm, the air you breathe, and the water you drink.

We ask the Farm Bureau to defend the interests of its members, defend family farmers and rural communities against CAFO encroachment.

Sincerely,

Signature(s): _____

Printed Name(s) _____

Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

CC: Senator David Koehler
Senator Jil Tracy
Rep. Mike Unes
Fulton County Board
ICCAW

¹ In the words of agricultural economist, Dr. John Kilpatrick, "...the amount of the value loss is typically an inverse function of distance (closer properties diminish more)' See Dr. John Kilpatrick, "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and Proximate Property Values, article, The Appraisal Journal, July 2001, Page 306

²See Illinois Farm Bureau, "Membership Policy Development" , flyer, GAC841D6, February 2017

³See Rachel Carson, "Silent Spring", Mariner Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Renewed 1990, Chap. 4: Surface Waters and Underground Seas, P.39

⁴ See Loka Ashwood, Danielle Diamond and Kendall Thu. 2014. "Where's the Farmer? Limited Liability in Midwest Industrial Hog Production." *Rural Sociology* (7)1: 2-27.