

# The Facts on Factory Farming

In the last century, the farming industry has seen major changes in the way our food is produced and distributed. Where once we had many individual farmers raising our livestock, growing our food, and milking our cows, now we see large corporations taking control. . Although these developments have led to a decrease in the cost of many meat and dairy products and an increase in the yield of our produce, a lot of the practices that account for these benefits come at a cost to consumer safety.

## Factory farming: A system of industrialized agriculture

On a modern day farm, there are often no animals to be seen; instead they live in giant storehouses or on CAFOs (Centralized Animal Feeding Operations), far away from any pastures. As for our crops, most farmers only cultivate one or two types of plants now, though thousands of acres could support a much wider variety.

- Four companies provide America with the majority of farmed animals<sup>1</sup>
  - Tyson
  - Cargill
  - Swift
  - National Beef
- 99% of meat in America comes from these factory farms<sup>1</sup>
  - 99.9% of chicken
  - 99% of turkey
  - 95% of pork
  - 78% of beef
- 97% of eggs come from laying hens on factory farms<sup>1</sup>
- Produce is being genetically modified to increase output<sup>2</sup>
  - 93% of soybeans
  - 93% of canola
  - 86% of corn

## Why does it matter?

A monopoly is being created on food. When a select few control an industry, it is those few that dictate exactly how the business is run, and it may not be to our benefit.

- In the name of efficiency, farmed animals are nonclinically treated with antibiotics (fed antibiotics when they are not sick)<sup>1</sup>
- Hormones are used to make livestock grow bigger, faster
  - Cattle are commonly treated with six different kinds of hormones: Oestradiol, Progesterone, Testosterone, Zeranone, Trenbolone, and Melengestrol.<sup>3</sup>
  - Dairy cows are treated with rBGH (recombinant bovine growth hormone) to increase milk production<sup>3</sup>
- Genetically engineered (GE) seed can be patented and controlled by companies

- (i.e. Monsanto, 674 patents). Once patented, the company can limit the use and saving of seed by farmers<sup>2</sup>
- The US produces 53% of GE crops-the most of any nation worldwide<sup>5</sup>

## Risks to human health

- The USDA recently determined nonclinical antibiotic supplements fed to livestock affects antibiotic resistance in humans<sup>6</sup>
- Hormone use in cattle and dairy products has been shown to contribute to health effects by researchers at Harvard and Cornell<sup>3</sup> including low sperm count, early onset of puberty in females, breast cancer, and colon cancer
- "More scientific effort and investigation is needed to ensure that consumption of GE foods is not likely to provoke any form of health problem."-Nutrition Reviews, 2009
  - Suspected risks include mild to severe allergic reactions and antibiotic resistance<sup>5</sup>
- Despite attempts by the public and Representatives such as Dennis Kucinich to pass the GE Food Right to Know Act, labeling of GE prodids is not required in the US under FDA regulations<sup>2</sup>

## Tell big Farming you won't tolerate the risk

In capitalist societies, one of the best ways to send a message to companies is to change your buying habits. If you take a stand by purchasing safe, nutritious food, you are taking a step toward change in the food industry.

- Many products contain traces of corn, soybean oil, and canola oil, the most common GM foods. Read labels when you go to the store.
- Buy organic
- Look for rBGH free milk
- Buy meat and produce from your local farmer's market
- Show the government you want them to step up regulations on food production by joining a food protection organization: Organic Trade Association, Food and Water Watch, or Find a food co-op near you

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3. The Scientific Committee on Veterinary Measures Relating to Public Health. "[Assessment of Potential Risks to Human Health from Hormone Residues in Bovine Meat and Meat Products](#)." European Commission, April 30, 1999.
4. Mercola, Joseph. "Monsanto's Many Attempts to Destroy All Seed but Their Own." mercola.com. 2009. Web. 9 Feb 2011.
5. "Genetically Modified Foods and Organisms." ornl.gov. Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Nov 2008. Web. 9 Feb 2011.
6. Brasher, Philip. "Antibiotics in Livestock Affect Humans, USDA Testifies." cornucopia.org. The Cornucopia Institute, 16 July 2010. Web. 9 Feb 2011.