

Analysis finds little advancement addressing food system concerns

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Five years after the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production (PCIFAP) released its landmark recommendations to remedy the public health, environment, animal welfare and rural community problems caused by industrial food animal production, a new analysis by Johns Hopkins University Center for a Livable Future (CLF) finds that the Administration and Congress have acted "regressively" in policymaking on industrial food animal system issues. The original report, *Putting Meat on the Table: Industrial Farm Animal Production in America*, was released in April 2008 and detailed myriad problems caused by the present industrial food animal production model. CLF began its analysis, "Industrial Food Animal Production in America: Examining the Impact of the Pew Commission's Priority Recommendations," late last year.

Robert S. Lawrence, MD, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, which produced the report, said, "There has been an appalling lack of progress. The failure to act by the USDA and FDA, the lack of action or concern by the Congress, and continued intransigence of the animal agriculture industry have made all of our problems worse."

The Pew Commission was a two-year study funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts through a grant to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Its charge was to review the dominant industrial farm animal production system and to develop consensus [recommendations](#) to solve the problems they found.

"If the last five years has shown us anything, it is that the public is more engaged than ever in the food system," said Governor John Carlin, Chair of the Commission. "The results of this analysis show that our policymakers are really not listening to their constituents."

In 2008, Commissioners determined that the negative effects of the industrial farm animal production system were too great and the scientific evidence was too strong to ignore. They called on significant changes to be implemented in four specific areas: public health, environment, animal welfare and economics of rural communities. In 2013, the problems have only gotten worse thanks to what report authors call an "assault on reforms" in Congress and an Administration acting "regressively" in its decision-making and policy-setting procedures.

The Commission's key recommendations were:

- Ban the non-therapeutic use of antimicrobials in food animal production to reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance to medically important antibiotics and other antimicrobials.
- Define non-therapeutic use of antimicrobials as any use in food animals in the absence of microbial disease or documented microbial disease exposure.
- Treat industrial farm animal production (IFAP) as an industrial operation and implement a new system to deal with farm waste, especially liquid waste systems, to replace the inflexible and broken system that exists today and to require permitting of more operations.
- Phase out the most intensive and inhumane production practices within a decade to reduce the risk of IFAP to public health and improve animal wellbeing (i.e., gestation crates, restrictive veal crates, and battery cages).
- Aggressively enforce the existing anti-trust laws applicable to food animal production, and where needed, pass additional laws

to provide a level playing field for producers.

- Increase funding for, expand, and reform animal agriculture research.

"In 2008, the recommendations were heralded by many in the agriculture community, the agencies and Congress as the catalyst they needed to make vital changes to a food supply that has been criticized as unsustainable and in some cases unsafe," said PCIFAP executive director Bob Martin. "Inaction was inexcusable five years ago, now it is unconscionable."

The PCIFAP consisted of 14 Commissioners from diverse fields, including public policy, veterinary medicine, public health, agriculture, [animal welfare](#), the food industry and rural society. The Commission assessed the current state of industrial animal agriculture based on site visits to production facilities across the country; consultation with industry stakeholders, [public health](#), medical and agriculture experts; public meetings; peer-reviewed technical reports; staff research; and Commissioners' own expertise.

More information: [www.jhsph.edu/research/centers ... for-a-livable-future](http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers...for-a-livable-future)

Provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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