



**Testimony for House Agriculture & Natural Resources
March 20, 2013
Opponent Stance on HB 2404**

Madam Chair Schwartz and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am Zack Pistora, Legislative Director for Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak against HB 2404, which makes amendments to Kansas Corporate Farming Law.

There is no argument to the importance of our animal agriculture to the Kansas economy as well as to providing food to people around the world. Agriculture has and will continue to be one of our top specialties and assets for our state and our country, and Kansas should continue to advance our agriculture practices to be smarter and more valuable each and every day. **However, the Kansas Sierra Club and Kansans all across the state feel that the bill today does not take a step in a smart direction, because it does not seem to serve the best interests of our communities; especially to concerns of economics, environment, and health.**

HB 2404 is geared toward expediting corporate Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) to Kansas to benefit our economy, by removing the protections currently in place to safeguard the family farm. The bill amends Kansas statutes to make it easier for out-of-state and even out-of-country companies to set up shop in our state. According to USDA Ag census, Kansas had 13,500 hog farms in 1980. Today, there are only 1500 operations, with 300 producing 95% of the state's pork. This statistic clearly demonstrates the trend that corporate agriculture is driving out smaller, local farms. In this case, *bigger isn't better*.

Kansas Sierra Club joins others in being very concerned that the increase in corporate animal agriculture and the decrease in smaller, localized farming are having a major negative economic impact on jobs, local businesses, and community development. Several economic studies of CAFOs demonstrate these negative local impacts:

1. Net Loss in Local Economy

Corporate CAFOs drive out more farming jobs than they provide and send revenues mostly out-of-state as opposed to the local area.

2. Lower Property Values and Economic Development Opportunities

Communities lose economic development opportunities with CAFOs lowering property values due to environmental and odor problems.



HB 2404 supports the trend of stacking the competitive deck against ordinary Kansas animal farmers and lets corporate farms take markets, profits, and jobs from local farmers. ***This is the wrong direction for animal agriculture in Kansas.***

Many research studies have concluded that corporate animal agriculture carries a long list of liability regarding environmental and health consequences.

1. Air pollution

The incredible noxious air emissions from these CAFOs, including ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and endotoxins pose a significant health risk. Neighbors and on-site workers experience high-levels of blood pressure and respiratory problems, including excessive coughing, sore throat, as well as headaches, nose-bleeds, diarrhea, and in extreme cases, life-threatening pulmonary edema. Large amounts of methane released by CAFOs add potent greenhouse gases to our atmosphere, only increasing a greater effect on our already-changing climate.

2. Odor Nuisance & Neurological Ramifications

The odor problems associated with large CAFOs are terrible. The build-up of large amounts of animal waste in a concentrated area with these CAFOs contributes to excessive odor problems that are absolutely awful for the quality of life for nearby residents. Studies have found that CAFO neighbors experience higher levels of negative mood states, such as anxiety, depression, fatigue, confusion, and reduced vigor.

3. Water Usage

In western Kansas, where water supplies are already limited, these large animal operations use lots and lots of water. In addition to providing for thousands of animals' cooling and hydration, even more water is used to reduce odor and to properly recycle wastewater to nearby fields for growing crops. Water is used to wash down barn floors, as well as to dilute the heavy amounts of waste in the anaerobic wastewater impoundments to achieve a minimum level of treatment. In the case of corporate swine facilities, swine wastewater has become highly saline. This poses a problem of having to dilute the wastewater even more with irrigation water for it to become usable for crops.

4. Contamination of Water and Soil

Potent levels of nitrates, metals, pathogens, parasites, and bacteria have been found in CAFOs manure lagoons according the researchers at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Thus, manure spills, leaking pits, and wastewater spreading cause serious pollution problems to water bodies and soil. Groundwater contamination to drinking water, dead fish and aquatic creatures, algae blooms, and bad crop growth are all risk factors involved with CAFO run-off.

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Corporate animal agriculture is thus not cost-beneficial over the long-term if added costs to our health, environment, and property values if the fore-mentioned types of pollution are not prevented. Kansans must be ensured, with a state guarantee, that our public health and community and environmental safety will not be compromised by increasing corporate animal practices.

The Kansas Sierra Club believes that rural communities and local governance ought to retain their authority to defend themselves from the ill-effects of CAFOs, and not be constrained by the ambitions of the state agriculture department 200-300 miles away in Topeka. If HB 2404 (or SB 191) were to pass, then you can look forward to a continuing flight of existing farm families out of the region.

Before we consider sending HB 2404 forward, let us make sure we are indeed making the smart choice by continuing to favor large-scale, corporate agriculture, instead of localized, community-centered, family farm models. **We ought to examine corporate farming and its overall impact – economically, environmentally, and governmentally – on Kansas animal agriculture and our communities' overall well-being.**

Again, thank you hearing our concerns. I will gladly stand for any questions.

Sincerely,

Zack Pistora

Life-long Kansan & son of a former pig farmer in Leavenworth County
Legislative Director & State Lobbyist for the Kansas Sierra Club