

Fear Of Agriculture

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"Animal agriculture is responsible for so much death, suffering and destruction, for both animals and humans."

"Do you know how much of our food is contaminated with GMO soy products?"

"GMO chemical farming must stop. Pesticides and herbicides are poisoning the planet and our people."

This is just a small example of the type of accusations that come across my newsfeed daily. And it's not only social media that spurs these statements about agriculture.

Last week I attended a township meeting in Cass County, Minnesota. A landowner agreed to sell a small piece of land for a 2500-sow farm. This particular sow farm is will produce high-value gilts (young female pig breeding stock) for other sow farms in Minnesota, one of which happens to include a sow farm we are part owners of.

Why locate this farm in Cass County?

Because there are essentially no other pigs in the county. And because there are virtually no other pigs in the county, transmission of viruses and illnesses from other pigs will not happen. Viruses and other illnesses are easily transmitted between pig farms that are in close proximity to each other. Raising pigs in an isolated location will help keep pigs healthy and as a pig farmer, that is our goal - *healthy pigs*. And in this case, our goal is to raise *healthy, high-value breeding stock*. Currently, the breeding stock source of our sow farm comes from northern Canada. Unfortunately, that's a *long* travel distance for these animals. By raising these animals only 3-5 hours away will result in a less stressful trip for these animals.

During this township meeting (under the direct supervision of deputy from the sheriff's department), a small group of citizens from the township voiced their opposition to the new sow barn and proposed a 24-month moratorium on building this site. They are not familiar with pig farming, which is understandable, and the meeting's purpose was to answer their questions and listen to their concerns.

Where facts not fear is needed.

While we were able to answer their questions, many of their concerns were completely unfounded.

I personally felt my blood pressure rise as the accusations were unleashed. The proposal of a 24-month moratorium didn't make much sense because there are already numerous regulations that need to be followed and anyone that has dealt with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency knows they have very *stringent regulations*.

Many of the accusations were really about fear - **Fear of Agriculture**. And it's troubling that our society has reached the point of either spewing fear and/or believing fear instead of asking questions and learning more about modern agriculture. Are we as a society really that far removed from agriculture that we actually believe farmers are out to ruin society and make people sick? Especially when the vast majority of us live on our farms where we breath the air and drink the water. Who is benefiting from this nonsense?

I take great pride in providing safe and healthy food for families.

During this meeting here is what I heard:

- People would get MRSA from the pigs
- The air will make people sick
- Manure is chock full of antibiotics and e. coli
- Property values will decrease by 80%
- Baby pigs fall through the slats (flooring) in the barn
- There will be decaying pig bodies
- The land in Martin County (county with highest number of pigs in Minnesota and where I live) is sterile
- Cancer alley is located in Martin County between Fairmont and Truman and insinuating it's caused by pigs
- 70-year-old farmers are forced off their land because their land is needed to spread pig manure
- Barns are using all the ground water
- "Big Ag" is contaminating groundwater and the land.

And these fear tactics not only came from township residents, but also a Maple Grove lawyer who has caused a lot of turmoil in Dodge County towards modern agriculture. She and her husband traveled to the township meeting and were spouting fear, fear and more fear. I truly believe she was trying to make a name for herself. Maybe an "Erin Brockovich" wanna be? Unfortunately, science and research are not on her side.

Fear is the "go to" tactic used by many who oppose modern agriculture. Why do so many people oppose modern agriculture when they are the very same people who have benefited from it's advancements? Why are we being attacked for our successes? Successes such as significantly less water usage, less resources, reduced carbon footprint and less pesticide usage - ***all while producing more***. Successes such as producing a ***safe, healthy and affordable food supply***.

Successes that allow **consumers food choices**.

The end result of the meeting is the chairman made a motion to propose a 6-month moratorium. The motion died because of a lack of a second. As of right now, the barn building will continue moving forward. It was enlightening to hear local citizens support the building project. It was also enlightening to hear one gentleman, who currently works on a pig farm, travel 89 miles to work *one way*. He would love to see more farms closer to where he lives.

But truly the bigger issue is how do we overcome this *fear of agriculture*? From someone who works in agriculture, it's heartbreaking and frustrating to hear and see avalanche after avalanche of agricultural fear. How do we stop it?

Farmers do need to continue reaching out to consumers and tell their story. But it would also be great if consumers and non-farming people would reach out to us. We would LOVE to share what we do and answer those questions. How do you reach out to farmers? Here are a few links that give you a direct connection to a farmer.

[Ask the Farmers](#)

["50 Shades" of Farmers](#)

[Gotta a Pig Question? Ask a Pig Farmer!](#)

[CommonGround](#)