

Who Do You Want To Raise Your Bacon?

Recently, there have been a number of [lawsuits filed in the state of North Carolina against Smithfield Foods](#). In fact, there are over 20 nuisance lawsuits against pig farms, waiting in the coffers. Three have already been through the court system and Smithfield has lost all three cases. The lawsuits are nuisance lawsuits filed by neighbors led by an out-of-state (Texas) lawyer. Too much noise, too much smell. It's important to note that all the farms followed all rules/regulations. There have been no violations, but they still were sued. Their only offense? They were farming.

The last lawsuit awarded 6 neighbors over \$470 million dollars, although the judge reduced it to 96 million. How generous. Trial lawyers typically receive about 1/3 of the award, and each of the neighbors will receive the remainder 60+ million. The bottom line you must ask, "Who do you want to raise your bacon?" Do you want farmers in the U.S. to raise the pigs or do you want to close farms down so we can buy our pork elsewhere? Because these lawsuits have real consequences – they shut farms down, which means no food is produced.

Raising hogs on the farm.

Let's take a closer look at livestock agriculture and more specifically raising hogs. Fact #1 – Hogs do create manure. Fact #2 – Yes, it does stink. There is no denying that fact. I live on a farm with about 2200 head and there are a few days a year where I close my windows because of the odor. But most days during the spring/summer/fall, my windows are open. So what do we do about the odor? Not much at this point. I have heard there may be some technology coming down the road that may help with animal manure odor, which doesn't surprise me because this is what we do in agriculture. See a problem, attempt to solve it.

But what really scares me about these lawsuits is where does it stop? I am afraid the new "Monsanto" (who is no longer) is "Smithfield." It is so very easy to attack a mega corporation because it's easier than attacking individual farmers. Yes, Smithfield is owned by the Chinese. It seems no one feels one bit guilty attacking a foreign-owned corporation. Family farms contract with Smithfield to raise hogs.

Why would pig farmers work with Smithfield?

Working with a company like Smithfield has some attractive advantages. Farmers don't have the cost of purchasing hogs, feeding them, dealing with a volatile market where there is no guarantee of a profit and no paycheck for six months (time to raise them to market weight). By working with a company like Smithfield, they are guaranteed a check every month. Farmers like it. Bankers like it. So even though people may be "yes, let's stick it to Smithfield," they need to understand there are

family farmers and employees directly impacted.

Stop suing

We need to stop suing farmers and our food supply. Now. Stop and think about what we are doing. It's nothing short of eliminating our domestic food source. Are we ready for that? *Do you think buying our pork from another country will be better? What country do you want to buy your pork from?* Please put your country of choice in the comments below because I would love to know where you want to buy your pork from.

Who's next?

If you attack one state's pig farms, why wouldn't other farms in other states be next? Why wouldn't it happen here in Minnesota? How about dairy, beef or poultry? Look at it from a trial lawyers point of view. It's a huge windfall for them if you have the right players. All you need is to combine a greedy lawyer, some wagon-hopping environmentalists or some radical PETA supporters. That is the equation. There is nothing stopping them.

This should scare every. single. consumer.

Why is growing our own food important?

- National security. As a country, we should absolutely NOT put ourselves in a position where we depend on other countries to provide food for us.
- Food safety. Our country produces the safest food in the world. Why would we not embrace and support that? Have we lost our common sense?

Building relationships in communities and legislators.

As a farmer, what can we do?

We need to be political and we need to build community relationships. We all need to look at our state political processes to make sure what is happening in North Carolina doesn't happen here. Thankfully, North Carolina has passed some legislation (with an override vote on the governor's veto) that will help reel in future lawsuits.

Secondly, build community relationships. Here are some [ideas farmers can do be involved in their local communities](#). Farmers need to get off the farm and build relationships within in their communities. I get it. It's not easy. But we have to make it a priority. One of the more popular events agriculture is involved with locally are [farm-to-table dinners](#). We literally have a dinner on a

local farm and invite community leaders, business owners, medical professionals, other influencers and have conversations. We listen. We answer questions. I believe it's harder to sue someone when you just shared dinner and wine with them.

Build relationships. Listen. Connect. Build trust.

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