



AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

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FB Provides Expertise on Livestock Production

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 3, 2006 – Modern livestock farms are growing in size for productivity and profitability reasons, but producers are increasingly focusing on both environmental and economic factors, according to testimony submitted by the American Farm Bureau Federation to a private national commission studying the U.S. livestock production industry.

AFBF today told members of the National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production, meeting in San Francisco, Calif., that growth in the size of livestock production facilities should not be viewed as a new threat to the environment. The commission is working to assess the state of the U.S. livestock sector and its relationship to the environment and other factors.

Cynthia Cory, director of environmental affairs for the California Farm Bureau, delivered testimony on behalf of AFBF, stating that the commission must enhance its focus on the economic trends driving the U.S. livestock sector.

AFBF told the commission that modern livestock production does not present a severe impact to the environment, due to the employment of modern production methods and an already-comprehensive regulatory system. AFBF stated that the U.S. livestock sector provides consumers with healthy products at affordable prices and does so in a safe and environmentally sound manner.

“For our members, farming and ranching is a business,” according to the Farm Bureau testimony. “Livestock producers have a living connection to the land that is second to none. It is inaccurate to say that they are poor environmental stewards or that they don’t care deeply about the health and well-being of their animals.”

According to statistics from the Agriculture Department, farms are indeed becoming larger. AFBF said one reason for this trend is that increasing regulation in many ways contributes to consolidation. “It is somewhat ironic that often many of the same people who want to increase regulation on agriculture are the same ones who object to farms growing larger,” AFBF stated.

The Farm Bureau testimony presented economic data that stated production costs have skyrocketed at a far faster pace than prices for livestock. This has occurred due largely to a significant run-up in petroleum prices. As a result, some producers have employed the business strategy of joining with other farmers to spread their expenses over a larger operation.

“Clearly, the commission is not focusing simply on the economics of animal agriculture,” said AFBF. “But unless economics is taken into account by the commission and acknowledged to be a key component in any of its recommendations, the commission runs the risk of ignoring a central part of what drives the industry today.”

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