

## Executive Summary

A committee called the National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production has embarked on a two-year effort to learn about the effects of modern animal agriculture on society and the environment and report its findings. In spite of its official-sounding name, this is not a government-sanctioned effort, and its intentions are unclear. As commission members travel the country gathering information, Farm Bureau and a coalition of agricultural organizations are monitoring their activities.

## Issue Background

Farmers and ranchers may have heard about the National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production ([www.ncifap.org](http://www.ncifap.org)), an organization formed last year to examine various components of the livestock and animal agriculture sector.

A joint effort of the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the NCIFAP is led by former Kansas Gov. John Car-

lin. The NCIFAP is not linked to the government, though the inclusion of “national” in its name may imply that to some people.

Including former Gov. Carlin, the commission consists of 18 individuals of varying backgrounds, and they meet about once every two to three months in a different location to examine aspects of animal agriculture.

The commission’s membership has been a source of concern because it does not include a sufficient number of people with any

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## National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production

June 2007

knowledge of today’s conventional agriculture. The commission, as originally composed, included actress Daryl Hannah, but she is no longer part of it. There have been a few other membership changes since the group began its work, and not all commissioners attend each scheduled event. For a complete list of current NCIFAP members, visit [www.ncifap.org/commissioners](http://www.ncifap.org/commissioners).

The American Farm Bureau Federation and several other orga-

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## The Role of Activists

Since activists' next moves are on the minds of many involved in raising farm animals, it should not be a surprise that some activists are trying to influence the commission's efforts. However, it is not clear what effect they will have on the final report and recommendations.

There is no question some activists have had opportunities to make their cases to members of the commission and its staff. Below are a few examples:

- Some commission members met with activists during their April meeting in Durham, N.C. A previously scheduled and sanctioned hog farm tour occurred during the same timeframe with other commission members.
- Environmentalists and a strong opponent of modern animal agriculture were invited to make presentations at the commission's first public hearing during events in Fayetteville, Ark., in February.

## Where Will This Go?

The commission has indicated it will finish its work by issuing several technical reports, writing a final report and releasing a series of recommendations in March 2008. It is not clear what will happen after that.

Because Congress is expected to complete its work on the next farm bill later this year, it seems highly unlikely the commission's efforts will coincide with the timeframe for consideration of the farm

- An attorney for the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment—a group with a record of opposing modern animal agriculture—met with commission members during last November's dairy-focused events in California.
- Representatives of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, the Environmental Integrity Project and the Food Animal Concerns Trust met with commissioners privately in Washington, D.C., in September 2006.

Bob Martin, the commission's executive director, has indicated to representatives of the agricultural sector that the commissioners have spent more time listening to presentations by ag interests and taking farm tours than they have with opposing activists. Since the commission's inception, Martin said its members and staff had devoted 32.5 hours of closed-door time to agricultural interests versus two hours of closed-door time to activists, as of mid-April 2007.

bill on Capitol Hill.

The group is neither linked to the federal government nor charged with reporting its findings to Congress. Therefore, if the commission's final product makes news, it may be for only a short time. And the final product may prove newsworthy only in agricultural and animal activist circles.

Thus far, the activist community does not appear highly ginned up in anticipation.

## A Closer Look

Only a few of the 18 commission members appear to have current or former ties to agriculture or livestock production:

- *John Carlin*—former governor of Kansas; former dairy farmer
- *Dan Glickman*—chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America; former U.S. secretary of agriculture
- *Thomas Hayes*—vice president of plant operations for global food and engineering, Cargill Inc.
- *Dan Jackson*—rancher; former president, Western Montana Stockgrowers Association; former committee member, Farm Service Agency
- *Bill Niman*—cattle rancher; founder and chairman of the board of Niman Ranch, Inc.

For a current, complete list of the commissioners, visit [www.ncifap.org/commissioners](http://www.ncifap.org/commissioners).

## Key Topics

The commission lists the following issues as those it is examining:

- Public health
- Impact on rural communities
- Air and water emissions
- Animal health and well-being

## The Role of Johns Hopkins

The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Md., is the top such school in the U.S., according to *U.S. News and World Report*.

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It ([www.jhsph.edu](http://www.jhsph.edu)) claims it is the world's largest school of public health and says it receives a quarter of all federal research funds awarded to the 37 accredited schools of public health in the U.S. It also says its researchers are experts in everything from AIDS to vitamins.

The National Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production is funded by a \$2.6 million grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts, which is administered by Johns Hopkins.

Some people have expressed concerns about Johns Hopkins' role and potential influence on commission members because of some of the initiatives developed or promoted at the school.

For instance, the public health school works in association with Meatless Monday, which the school's Web site describes as "a national public health campaign to reduce meat and saturated fat consumption." As part of this effort, the school's restaurant offers additional vegetarian choices one day a week.

It should be noted that GRACE, the Global Resource Action Center for the Environment, appears to partner with the Center for a Livable Future in the School of Public Health to promote the Meatless Monday initiative. GRACE, which is known in agricultural circles for its activists' opposition to the construction of

new livestock facilities and its "Meatrix" online videos, was founded by New York socialite Helaine Heilbrunn Lerner in 1996. Visit [www.meatlessmonday.com](http://www.meatlessmonday.com) and [www.jhsph.edu/clf/programs/eating/proj\\_meatless.html](http://www.jhsph.edu/clf/programs/eating/proj_meatless.html) for more information.

But in a letter to "Maine Agriculture Today," NCIFAP Chairman Carlin wrote, "While the NCIFAP operates independently and I do not speak for the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, by no means should the 'Meatless Monday' campaign reflect an anti-meat bias at the prestigious institution."

Another initiative of the Center for a Livable Future in the public health school is called the Spira/GRACE Project on Industrial Animal Production. In this case, GRACE stands for GrassRoots Action Center for the Environment. This program "addresses the impacts of industrial animal production on the environment and the public's health by providing information that can inform public policy initiatives to reduce the harm generated by current methods," according to the Web site. Visit [www.jhsph.edu/clf/programs/farming/proj\\_sg.html](http://www.jhsph.edu/clf/programs/farming/proj_sg.html) for more.

Further, monitoring of the

commission's efforts by the agricultural sector has revealed Johns Hopkins' officials had one particular issue they wanted to be the focus of a technical report from the beginning: antibiotic resistance. Johns Hopkins' officials also had in mind the person they wanted to write that report—their very own Dr. Ellen Silbergeld, who has authored previous studies on this issue. For more information on Dr. Silbergeld, visit [http://faculty.jhsph.edu/Default.cfm?faculty\\_id=648](http://faculty.jhsph.edu/Default.cfm?faculty_id=648). That the school had a report and its author in mind before the commission was organized remains a concern.

When Carlin and a few other commissioners officially unveiled the formation of the commission in Washington, D.C., in September 2006, he was asked about the inclusion of "industrial" in the commission's name. He indicated Johns Hopkins established the name of the commission before he and other members were selected. "I'd prefer to move on to the issues and not be bogged down in whether we should change the title," Carlin said. He added that commissioners had no plan to peg their review of animal agriculture to a minimum number of animals per facility.

### Future Commission Events

#### When

June 4-6, 2007  
Sept. 10-12, 2007  
Nov. 12-14, 2007  
March 2008

#### Where

Fort Collins, Colo.  
Madison, Wis.  
Kansas City, Mo.  
Washington, D.C.

## Issue Background

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nizations representing the livestock and meat industries have monitored the NCIFAP's activities since its formation. The Animal Agriculture Alliance and CMA Consulting also assist AFBF and other interested parties with close monitoring and coordination of activities relating to NCIFAP.

The agricultural sector's approach toward the NCIFAP thus far has involved consistent engagement and holding accountable the commissioners and commission staff members.

In this way, agricultural interests are building a detailed record that shows their commitment to providing assistance and constructive criticism, when necessary, to the commission to ensure it looks at the issues from all angles. This tactic is believed to be yielding more positive results than if agriculture expressed uncompromising opposition to the commission.

For example, the National Milk Producers Federation helped arrange a tour of a dairy near San Francisco when the commission met there in November 2006.

A tour of poultry facilities was made possible with the cooperation of Tyson Foods when the

commission was in Fayetteville, Ark., earlier this year.

In both cases, commission members almost certainly would not have considered agriculture's side of the story had the Animal Agriculture Alliance and related organizations not been actively involved. It also seems the commission members who attended these events accepted the tour invitations with skepticism but ended with positive impressions of the farms and farmers they met.

Regular dialogue also has resulted in agricultural representatives testifying at some commission events and regular information-sharing among commission staff members and representatives of the Animal Agriculture Alliance and CMA Consulting.

Since the commission's formation, it convened meetings in Iowa, North Carolina and Washington, D.C., in addition to those meetings in California and Arkansas referenced earlier.

Additional meetings are scheduled for Colorado, Wisconsin and Missouri later in 2007, and tours are in the works for these locations as well.

Gov. Carlin stated previously that NCIFAP members intend to

issue one consensus report and set of recommendations regarding their findings in March 2008 in Washington, D.C.

The commission has sought experts to write and review technical reports about issues like animal welfare, public health and the effects of modern farm animal production on employees and communities.

As a result of choosing to engage the commission, agricultural interests had opportunities to supply the commission with the names of university researchers and others who might agree to help with these reports.

While it is unclear what the end result will be, the decision to engage commission members and staff means agricultural organizations have had opportunities to share their views.

## For More Information

The following AFBF staff members assembled this issue briefing:

- **Anne Keller**, director of issues management in public relations, (202) 406-3659 and [annek@fb.org](mailto:annek@fb.org).
- **Jim Sartwelle**, livestock economist in economic analysis, (202) 406-3623 and [jsartwelle@fb.org](mailto:jsartwelle@fb.org).

### Additional Resources

Additional information is posted on Farm Bureau's intranet site, SILO, at <http://silo.fb.org/issues/livestock>.

Among the resources posted on the Livestock Issues Management pages on SILO are news clips, links to past Issues Management Briefings about related issues and links to agricultural law programs around the U.S. Links to related conference calls and PowerPoint® slide presentations also are posted on these pages.