

Farmers Worldwide Go 'Greener,' Study Finds

DENVER, Colo.— A reduction of pesticide use and switching to less damaging substances have reduced the risk to the environment in the United States by 66 percent since 1987, according to "Farmers since Rio — the contribution of farmers' organizations toward sustainable development," a study conducted by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP).

The study also shows that Swedish farmers have reduced pesticide use by 70 percent since 1985 and that German farmers have reduced pesticide use by over 50 percent since 1990. In the Netherlands, energy efficiency in the horticulture sector has improved by 40 percent over the past 15 years and will improve by an additional 10 percent by the

year 2000.

"This is a trend in many parts of the world, as chemical use declines and fertilizer use is better targeted by using better technology," said Graham Blight, IFAP president. On the other hand, said Blight, those "who live in poverty aren't likely to do much for the environment. Someone who's concentrating on feeding their family the next day cannot have a major interest in the environment."

National Farmers Union President (NFU) Leland Swenson, who chairs an IFAP committee that encourages cooperation between developed and less developed countries, said he believes the study demonstrates that independent family farmers and ranchers are the best and most cost-

efficient stewards of natural land and water resources.

The IFAP report was issued prior to this week's special session of the United Nations General Assembly on environmental and development progress made since the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

National Farmers Union is a founding member of IFAP and a

strong proponent of environmental sustainability. Swenson was an official U.S. delegate to last November's World Food Summit, which dealt with balancing world food security and environmental concerns. He was also a participant in a follow-up teleconference to the Summit that was broadcast to 15 sites nationwide May 21.

"Family farmers and ranchers

are anxious to continue making environmental investments in their land if they are able to retain ownership and if public policy makes it economically feasible to make such investments," said Swenson. "It is also crucial that international trade agreements encourage such action, rather than make investments in the environment economically daunting."

Interstate Sale Of State-Inspected Meat Would Bring \$56 Million To Ohio

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Allowing state-inspected meat processors to sell across state lines could mean \$56 million to Ohio's economy, according to an Ohio State University study.

Today's law allows only federally inspected meat processors to ship their products to other states and restricts nearly 260 state-inspected plants from expanding into interstate markets.

But Ohio State agricultural economist Tom Sporleder found that lifting the restriction would likely

increase the gross revenue of Ohio's meat processing sector by more than \$36 million and improve the sector's earnings by \$3.4 million. About 17 percent of the livestock slaughtered in Ohio are state inspected, compared to only 2 percent nationally.

Because of the predicted increase in meat sales, gross revenue for Ohio's businesses as a whole could improve by more than \$56 million and earnings

could increase by \$17.4 million if the regulations were changed, Sporleder said.

The equivalent of about 125 full-time jobs also would be added to the meat processing sector and 588 jobs gained across the economy.

"The added revenue and jobs wouldn't happen the first year, but they would happen as the economy adjusts to the new law," Sporleder said.

He thinks the impact of changing the law could be even larger. The study only accounts for plants that slaughter animals. Companies that buy carcasses and process them into meat products were not included because the U.S. Department of Agriculture does not have statistics on those.

The study includes two parts. The first used a computer program designed by Sporleder called OHFOOD that accounts for the linkages of industries in the economy and estimates the potential economic influence of changes in Ohio's food and agricultural sectors. The second part looked at how changing current law specifically would affect four Ohio meat processors — Broughton Cannery in Broughton, Tyler Meat Company in Toledo, Falter Packing Company in Columbus and Blue Chip Meats in Cincinnati.

"These case studies show that the current regulation restricts small, family-owned slaughter and processing plants from expanding sales by 27 percent to 40 percent," Sporleder said.

The plants are not allowed to participate in interstate value-added specialty product markets or enter into local supply relationships with firms that distribute meat products outside of Ohio.

While changing the law would also mean state-inspected plants in other states could market in Ohio, Sporleder thinks Ohio processors would still come out ahead.

"I think Ohio processors create unique niche market and above-average-quality products that are non-substitutable," Sporleder said. "Ohio processors have distinguishable brand names and offer farmers a local outlet for their livestock."

State-inspected processors have the option to switch to federally inspected programs, allowing them to ship their products across state borders. But the cost to bring plants and equipment into federal compliance and inflexible federal inspection schedules discourage many of these smaller plants from switching, Sporleder said.

Food safety assurance is not a concern with interstate sale of state-inspected meat, because state inspection standards are required to be at least equal to federal meat and poultry inspections.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture asked Ohio State to conduct the study. Sporleder, Ohio State agricultural economics graduate student Elizabeth Belleville and Ohio State University Extension economist Constance Jackson complete the project.

ODA joined with three Ohio meat packing companies and the Ohio Association of Meat Processors in a lawsuit filed in February against the U.S. Department of Agriculture over the federal prohibition of interstate shipment of state-inspected meat and poultry products. The suit alleges the ban violates the constitutional rights to due process and equal treatment of 26 states and approximately 3,000 state-inspected meat and poultry processors nationwide.

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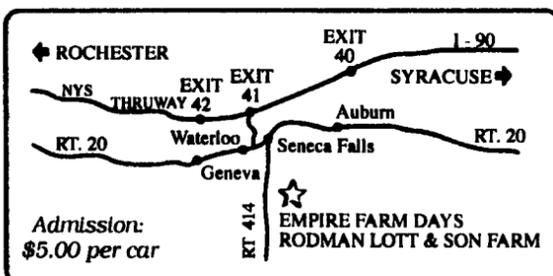
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