

Pork and Pollution

A Fact Sheet on Industrial Hog Production and Environmental Justice

What are Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)? According to the EPA, CAFOs are industrial operations “where animals [cattle, dairy cows, swine, chickens] are kept and raised in confined situations. They generally congregate animals, feed, manure, dead animals, and production operations on a small land area. Feed is brought to the animals rather than the animals grazing or otherwise seeking feed in pastures.”¹

CAFOs were created through a system of **agricultural subsidies, deregulated manure management**, and the **concentration of the industry** in the hands of a few at the expense of many.

A large CAFO with 800,000 pigs may yield over 1.6 million tons of waste per year, 1.5 times the amount of sanitary waste produced in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.² Unlike human waste, the fecal matter is not treated, and instead ends up in football field-sized pits or is sprayed on crops, polluting **water, soil, air, and human health**.

Concentration of Industrial Swine Operations in the United States

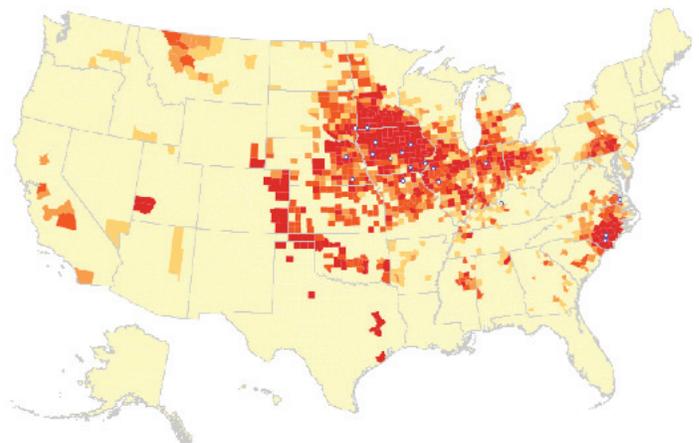
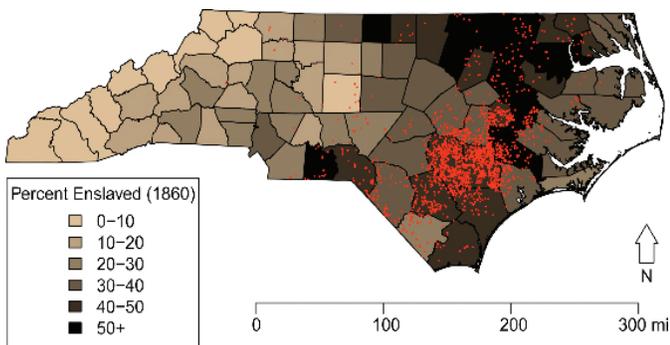


Fig 2. Credit: Food and Water Watch³

North Carolina Enslaved Population in 1860 And Industrial Hog Operations Re-Permitted in 2015



Source: 1860 Census: Population, Agriculture & Other Data [US, States & Counties]

Fig 3. Credit: Nathaniel MacNeill, UNC Ph.D. student in the Department of Epidemiology⁴

North Carolina has the highest density of hog factory farms in the U.S.

95% of NC hog CAFOs are located in low-income communities of color in the eastern part of the state, making it an **environmental justice** issue.

- Top 2 hog producing counties in the U.S.: Sampson County and Duplin County
- Largest hog slaughterhouse in the world: Bladen County

Effects of Hog Factory Farms

Water



Waste and fertilizer runoff from hog factory farms is riddled with microbes, pesticides, and hormones, which enters rivers, lakes, and streams. The waste causes algal blooms, kills fish, and **pollutes drinking water**. CAFOs are poorly regulated under the Clean Water Act.

Air



Hog CAFOs emit **hydrogen sulfide**, a toxic gas that causes vomiting and other side effects, as well as **ammonia**, which can convert to acid rain. Children near CAFOs may experience more **asthmatic symptoms**. Factory farms are not regulated under the Clean Air Act.

Antibiotics



Nontherapeutic use of antibiotics—for promoting growth and preventing disease in animals—can lead to **antibiotic resistance**, undermining the treatment of human infection.

Labor



Contract growers are required to spend vast sums to convert their farms into large operations. They often enter debt cycles and become economically dependent on the integrators. Workers face job insecurity, few breaks, and exposure to disease and extreme heat.

Climate



Warming Temperatures: The worldwide slaughtering of animals accounts for 18-51 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, in the form of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. A rise in extremely hot days (above 95 degrees) will continue to affect the health of workers.

Hurricanes and Extreme Weather: After Hurricane Floyd in 1999, pig feces overflowed from lagoons, ran off spray fields into watersheds, and cloaked trees in toxic waste. Over the next few years, category four and five hurricanes are predicted to strike NC every 2 years.

Sea Level Rise: CAFOs in coastal areas will flood, causing lagoons to overflow, compromising the infrastructure of small towns, and further spreading infectious disease.

Definitions

Environmental Justice: The North Carolina Environmental Justice Network defines EJ as “The right to a safe, healthy, productive, and sustainable environment for all, where ‘environment’ is considered in its totality to include the ecological (biological), physical (natural and built), social, political, aesthetic, and economic environments. Environmental justice refers to the conditions in which such a right can be freely exercised, whereby individual and group identities, needs, and dignities are preserved, fulfilled, and respected in a way that provides for self-actualization and personal and community empowerment. This term acknowledges environmental “injustice” as the past and present state of affairs and expresses the socio-political objectives needed to address them.”⁵

Climate Justice: Recognizes that those who are hit first and hardest by climate impacts have contributed least to the problem. A climate justice framework suggests that the solution to climate change lies in addressing social, economic, and political systems that perpetuate discrimination and heat up an already fevered planet.

To keep in touch with updates, organizing strategies, and resources, send contact information to:
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1. “Agriculture: Animal Production.” EPA. Environmental Protection Agency, n.d. Web. <https://www.epa.gov/agriculture/agriculture-animal-production>

2. Hribar, Carrie, MA, and Mark Schultz, MEd. “Understanding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and Their Impact on Communities.” (2009): 2. National Association of Local Boards of Health. Web. <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/docs/understanding_cafos_nalboh.pdf>.

3. “Factory Farm Map.” Digital Map. Food and Water Watch. May 2015. Web. <http://www.factoryfarmmap.org>

4. MacNell, Nathaniel. “The influence of slavery on the locations of North Carolina’s industrial hog operations.” Lecture, 17th Annual North Carolina Environmental Justice Network Summit: The Role of International Solidarity in Achieving Environmental Justice, The Franklinton Center at Bricks, Whitakers, North Carolina, October 16, 2015.

5. “Environmental Justice Definitions.” 17th Annual North Carolina Environmental Justice Network Summit Conference Guide. North Carolina Environmental Justice Network. October 16, 2015. Print.

*“The modern world worships the gods of speed and quantity, and of the quick and easy profit, and out of this idolatry monstrous evils have arisen.”—Rachel Carson, foreword to *Animal Machines**