

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission/Review Panel, Ladies and Gentleman.

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this important hearing regarding the hog industry in Manitoba. We have reviewed the guide prepared by the CEC and in response, have composed a presentation for our family farm operations.

Our family operates a mixed grain and hog farming operation near the small village of Kola, Manitoba. Our land base straddles the Manitoba Saskatchewan border approximately 20 miles west of Virden. Four generations of the family have been farming in the area for almost 50 years and the fifth is following close behind. We certainly hope that they will be able to continue farming if they choose to do so in the future.

Our farm has been through dramatic changes during the past 50 years. One of the most significant of our generation was the decision to diversify our grain farm and begin livestock production in the mid-nineties when prairie farmers were facing abolishment of the Crow Freight Benefit. Given our geographic location, loss of the freight subsidy and the increased cost of transporting low value grains to distant markets and ports for export would surely reduce returns on grain which were already marginal at best. We were concerned of our ability to compete with highly subsidized low value grain on world markets. It would be risky to continue to rely solely on grain production and we were searching for options to sustain viability by adding value to our production and diversifying operations. In doing so, we were also hoping to provide an opportunity for the next generation to remain on the farm if they chose to do so.

Livestock production appeared to provide many of the answers we were looking for, and would benefit existing farm operations by utilizing the grain production, reduce input costs with the use of the nutrient by-products, as well as provide an opportunity for year-round full-time jobs and other economic benefits for the community at large.

We started our first hog operation in 1994 which has since grown to 6,000 sows on multiple sites. Approximately 50% of our production is marketed within Manitoba both as market hogs and to other producers who grow them to market weight. The other 50% are exported to the US.

The development of this industry required huge capital investment which stimulated economic activity and growth in our community. In addition to the jobs and other benefits during the development and construction phase, our farms now provide full-time employment for more than 30 employees with an average salary exceeding \$34,000, an annual payroll of more than \$ 1,000,000, and our purchases of feed and other local supplies exceed \$5,000,000.

Practically all of our input costs are local Manitoba products and services, and there are tremendous spin-off benefits:

- The local feed mill has increased its operations and employment and currently provides 20 full-time jobs, and a local marketing option for over 1,000,000 bu. of grain
- Other local producers have access to our feeder pig supply for diversifying their own operations
- The local hog operations add more than \$100,000 annually to municipal property and education taxes, and have recently participated with substantial additional funding towards a tremendous new municipal water system.

In a small community of only 100, in a region where population continues to decline, every one of these jobs is tremendously important. We see growth within our community most noticeably in the school, which was previously threatened with closure and has since had 2 expansions in recent years

The hog industry is very important to our farm, our community, and the province of Manitoba in general. All of the jobs and spin-off benefits add to our quality of life and

well-being. We are most concerned that the industry will proceed in a sustainable manner and all of us have to make every effort to ensure that it does.

Since first becoming involved in the industry we have seen many changes and improvements. Management techniques, economics and ever-increasing regulations have changed the way the industry operates today. From initial design of the facilities through development and operation we follow a strict set of guidelines and regulations which we understand are among the strictest anywhere.

The safety and health of staff are of prime importance, and the well-being, handling and management of the livestock are taken into consideration in all of our management and operational decisions. The hogs are housed in well-ventilated climate-controlled facilities for the comfort of both staff and livestock.

Following are our comments, experiences and opinions of the topics that the CEC is particularly interested in:

We acknowledge and value the support of scientific evidence and all of the expertise that is available, and we realize that research continues.

Nutrient Management

Our farm currently utilizes professional swine nutrient services. The nutritionists design feed using ingredients which will best stimulate health and growth in all stages of the pig's growth.

Since phosphorous has been identified as a potential increasing problem to the environment, we have included 'Phytase' which is a product added to the feed to assist in the breakdown of phosphorous which in turn leads to a lower phosphorous level in the animals waste.

Manure Management

The majority of the content inside manure storage is water. We prefer to have the manure in liquid form in order to handle it properly and to ensure the contents of the manure storage is being injected into spread fields in a controlled fashion.

The hog industry is leading the way in methods of recycling manure. We have taken a product that was perceived to have no value and have turned it into a cost saving, rich nutrient. With spring application in our often dry area, we have found to have increased the germination of our crops due to the extra moisture applied through injection which in turn helps to obtain higher crop yields in the fall. Most of what we take out of the ground is returned to the soil and the process continues.

Our farm abides by the Manitoba Provincial Manure and Mortalities Regulations. We utilize professional manure management services to assist us in filing of our manure management plan.

The manure management plan is designed and regulated by the province in order to properly monitor manure application. The plan includes many regulations such as setbacks from water bodies and water courses, maximum application rates for a specific crop that is intended to be grown and a summary of total product applied and its economic benefit to the farmer.

To properly complete a manure management plan we must first perform soil tests on all land where manure is intended to be applied. We must submit multiple manure analysis tests showing nitrogen and phosphorous levels. These tests are utilized in order to determine an application rate suitable for the land and plant use. Our manure management and application costs exceed \$273,000.00 annually.

Soil Quality

Our farm has been doing soil tests for over 25 years in order to apply soil nutrients at proper levels. Through these tests we have found our land to be phosphorous deficient. We consistently need to apply nitrogen and phosphorous at controlled rates in order to grow a suitable crop.

Through soil testing we have also discovered other benefits of applying manure to the land. Much of our land has a low organic matter. On land where we have applied manure for a number of years we have seen increases to organic matter levels which in turn leads to increased productivity. Not only is it rich in nitrogen and phosphorous, but also contains vital nutrients such as potassium, sodium, and calcium. All of these nutrients are required for producing a high grade crop. The use of manure eliminates the use of synthetic fertilizers, which in turn saves our grain operation thousands of dollars in fertilizing costs. We own a majority of the land on which we apply manure and do not want to jeopardize it in any way. When applying the manure to the spread fields, we use a GPS guidance system to minimize overlap and to maintain consistency in application.

Quality of Water and Supply

One of our greatest concerns is water. We take every precaution to ensure that there is no contamination of surface and ground water. We prefer to use manure as fertilizer because of its ability to adhere with the soil.

We believe that regulations applied by the government to the hog industry ensure that every possible measure is taken to protect our ground and surface water quality. We further believe that the Manitoba government should be as concerned with the practices of waste disposal from our Cities and other large populations which reside near waterways to ensure our lakes and waterways are not being polluted.

The Manitoba hog industry is only one of the many sources contributing to the phosphorus levels in Lake Winnipeg. We have come to understand that the hog industry is responsible for only 1% to 1.5% of the phosphorus loading in Lake Winnipeg, but is the only industry that the government has targeted. This is unfair, and it is hurting farmers and other agribusinesses.

The public now has the perception that the hog industry is the main contributing factor when in fact, there are many large and small offenders and no action appears to be taken against them. This perception was confirmed in a recent issue of a popular farm paper in the opinion section and the quote stated “We do have a problem in Manitoba. Otherwise, why would we have a moratorium on further construction of factory hog facilities?...” (Western Producer April 12, 2007)

Odour

The hog industry is not much different than any other livestock industry when it comes to odour issues. There are times when the odour from one type of operation may be stronger than another but at all times we are aware of this and attempt to be good neighbors. During the winter months the manure storage is frozen over which greatly reduces odour, and in order to decrease odour during the summer months we cover the manure storage with a layer of straw. In addition we plant a shelter belt of trees around our barn sites. At all times we follow the conditional-use permit requirements. The industry continues to research this issue and we are confident that odour will be reduced in the future.

Bio-Security and Disease Transmission

Our hog operation follows exceedingly strict guidelines when it comes to protecting against disease in our animals. Veterinarians closely monitor the health status of our animals and we apply any recommendations they might have. We ensure when hauling

our own pigs that the transportation equipment gets a complete daily wash to help prevent the possible transfer of bio-hazards.

All of our farm sites follow the CQA (Canadian Quality Assurance Program). This is an on-farm food safety program based on an internationally-recognized, effective food safety control system known as HACCP which stands for (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point). CQA has been developed and maintained by the Canadian Pork Council and is formally recognized by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) as a technically sound food safety program.

Climate Change

Global warming is a problem that involves everyone, not just pig farmers. We are concerned about the effects of global warming and, attempt to take the steps necessary and able, to minimize pollution.

Conclusion

The industry is extremely important to us and our community. As residents of Manitoba, we rely on our government to make decisions based on scientific facts and common sense. In our opinion to put a “Pause” on an entire industry in order to gather information is clearly **NOT** common sense. It appears there may be a larger underlying problem that is being blamed on the hog industry. The spin off effects of implementing a moratorium on the industry is clearly negative. The public is being misled on how the industry operates.

The application process for permitting a facility must change. Municipal Councils can now turn down a proposal without giving valid reasons and the proponent has no chance of an appeal. An appeal process should be available to hear a case at a higher level and allow Municipal Councils relief to not have to be both judge and jury and often have to “pick sides” for or against a neighbor. Municipal Councils are often not experts and do

not have the expertise or the desire to properly make these sometimes very difficult decisions.

Manitoba livestock regulations are among the strictest in North America. Regulations change so often that it is hard to measure the progress of any regulations that are currently in place. The more regulations introduced the higher the costs, and as a result the operation must become larger in order to be a success.

Thank you for your time and we wish you the best in your difficult task.