



Socially Responsible Production



Producing safe, healthy, nutritious and affordable pork products for your family and families around the world.





What is “Socially Responsible Production?” It’s not just a catchy title. It’s the underlying ideal that all pig farmers maintain in order to produce safe, healthy, nutritious and affordable pork products for your family and families around the world.

That includes how farmers care for the well-being of their animals, the role they play as good neighbors in their communities and the steps they take to ensure the health and safety of their employees.

So take a look and see the commitment of today’s pig farmers, working each day to care for their environment, raise healthy animals and provide high-quality pork products.

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"I take the humane treatment of animals seriously because it is the right thing to do. It's all about caring for the pigs so that they live healthier, more productive lives. I want everybody to know the pigs I raise on my farm are treated well."

- Bryan Barrow, LL Murphrey Co., Farmville, N.C.

Protect and Promote Animal Well-Being

The way pigs are raised has changed significantly over the last 50 years. While the practices and technologies used on farms today look much different, the commitment to humane animal treatment is as strong as ever. Farmers understand that treating animals humanely is the right thing to do and that well cared for animals produce safe, healthy food.

Every day on farms across the country, pig farmers demonstrate responsibility and dedication to the animals in their care. Pigs today are raised with their health and well-being as a priority. Nobody is more committed to the welfare of their animals than America's pig farmers.

An important aspect of treating animals humanely is doing the right thing to keep pigs healthy.

As a result, great strides have been made in areas such as farm design, animal handling practices and veterinary medicine, each of which has enhanced pigs' health and comfort compared with decades ago. The best scientific research available indicates there are several types of housing options for pigs. Regardless of the housing option, what really matters is the individual care given to each pig.

ⁱ <http://extension.missouri.edu/news/DisplayStory.aspx?N=597>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.pork.org/certification/default.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.pork.org/Certification/10/tqa.aspx>

^{iv} <http://www.pork.org/research/default.aspx>



While some farmers choose to raise pigs outdoors, most pigs today are housed in barns that protect them from weather extremes, predators and parasites. A study from the University of Missouri concludes that raising pigs indoors is healthier for the animals and allows for a higher-quality product for consumers. ⁱThe farmer-funded Pork Checkoff collaborates with farmers to develop best practices and to ensure that we continue to improve the way pigs are raised.

Pig farmers strive to meet the public's expectations for raising healthy animals through the Pork Quality Assurance® Plus (PQA Plus®) program, which offers farmers science-based training and tools to support them in delivering the highest level of animal care. Farms are visited by certified PQA Plus advisors (a veterinarian, university Extension specialist or agricultural educator) to provide an objective assessment of on-farm animal well-being, ensuring that pigs are being raised using high standards of care and that producers are continuously improving best practices. ⁱⁱAdditionally, the Transport Quality Assurance® program helps ensure the animals continue to receive humane treatment after they leave the farm. ⁱⁱⁱ

With the goal of humanely raising healthy animals and improving the quality of pork products, farmers continuously incorporate new procedures to closely monitor the health and well-being of the animals. As part of that proactive approach, the Pork Checkoff focuses on education and research that promote continuous improvement in the way pigs are raised. ^{iv}This science-based research helps farmers better understand how to care for the pigs so the animals lead healthy lives and farmers deliver a safe product for consumers.

Safeguard Natural Resources

Leaving the air, land and water in better condition than they found them is a daily commitment for pig farmers. An environmental study looking at pig farming since 1959 concludes that producing a pound of pork today has a 35 percent smaller carbon footprint, uses 41 percent less water and requires 78 percent less land. And, farmers today are raising 29 percent more pigs than they did 50 years ago.¹

Today's farms recycle the manure produced by pigs into a valuable fertilizer for crops, such as corn and soybeans.

Increased production with a reduced environmental impact: that's true sustainability. It involves using new management techniques to provide greater care for animals, which leads to healthier, more productive pigs and stronger environmental protection. Practices such as these allow today's farmers to continue providing food for people in this country and around the world in a responsible and sustainable way.

Farm animals produce manure, which can be an environmental challenge without proper management. Today's farms recycle the manure produced by pigs – using its nutrients to nurture growth in corn, soybean and hay fields. Once harvested, some of these crops come back to the farm to be fed to the animals.

This continuous cycle is as old as agriculture itself. Today, science-based environmental education and management training programs developed by the Pork Checkoff help farmers continuously improve their practices. This can include conducting regular on-farm water audits, making sure that all equipment is maintained so that water is not being wasted. In doing so, farmers are dedicated to conserving water and other resources.

Protecting the environment comes naturally to pig farmers because they understand what it takes to live up to their neighbors' expectations and earn community trust. Meeting growing demand for food with limited impact on our environment requires that we produce more food using fewer natural resources. America's pig farmers understand the importance of this and are making it happen.

¹ <http://www.pork.org/News/1364/NewStudyShowsTodaysPorkProductionMoreSustainablethan50YearsAgo.aspx>



“Those of us who make a living from the land have a deep commitment to protecting the air, land and water. As a farmer, I realize it's a privilege to have the opportunity to farm in my community. That's why I do everything I can to protect our environment, earning the trust of my neighbors and community.”

- James Petrik, BPM Seedstock LLC., Gayville, S.D.







"I live in this community. My family enjoys our pork products, drinks the same water and breathes the same air as our neighbors. For us, protecting public health and protecting my family are one and the same."

- Andrew Reinecker, Reinecker Farms, York Springs, Pa.

Public Health

Pig farmers are doing their part to help people lead healthy lifestyles. Years ago, consumers made it clear they wanted leaner, more nutritious sources of protein. Pig farmers responded by using new practices to produce leaner pork.

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Today's pork tenderloin is comparable in leanness to a boneless, skinless chicken breast. In fact, a 3-ounce serving of trimmed pork tenderloin has only 2.98 grams of fat compared with 3.03 grams of fat in a chicken breast. Pork also has 27 percent less saturated fat compared with 20 years ago.¹

Reflecting other advances made to ensure the safety of pork products, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recently determined that a final internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit with a three-minute rest can be used to safely cook pork chops, roasts and tenderloins, a decrease of 15 degrees from the previous recommendation. Ground pork, like all ground meat, should be cooked to 160 degrees.

Safe, wholesome pork begins with keeping animals healthy. Farmers work closely with veterinarians to develop health plans that may include the use of antibiotics. Responsible antibiotic use helps sick animals return to health while also preventing animals from becoming ill or suffering.

There is, however, growing public concern about the use of animal-health products, such as antibiotics for animal care. Pig farmers acknowledge this concern and use antibiotics only when necessary to ensure the best care of the animal, contributing to a healthy and productive life.

Pig farmers support science-based, peer-reviewed health programs and training sessions that are designed and monitored by veterinarians, university experts and animal care specialists. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approves the use of antibiotics in farm animals only after a rigorous review of human, animal and environmental safety. Programs used by pig farmers, such as Pork Quality Assurance® Plus, emphasize the responsible use of antibiotics.

Having the public's best interests at heart is an important aspect of any successful farm. That's why pig farmers do their part to ensure that public health is protected.

¹ <http://porkandhealth.org/filelibrary/Slim7%20single.pdf>

Produce Healthy Pigs and Safe Food

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“Consumers, including my family, expect their food to be safe. That’s why I do everything I can to make sure the pork that comes from our farm can be trusted.”

- Patty Goff, Circle Four Farms, Milford, Utah



Many of the steps pig farmers take to ensure the animal’s health are also beneficial to food safety.

Consumers have the right to expect that pigs are raised in a way that keeps them healthy. Pig farmers embrace that obligation and do what’s right to raise healthy pigs.

Many of the steps pig farmers take to ensure the animal’s health are also beneficial to food safety. For instance, farmers work closely with their veterinarians to develop a plan that maintains the health of the herd, which may include the use of antibiotics. These plans are then followed, observing antibiotic use guidelines, with the goal of protecting animal health and producing safe food.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves antibiotic use in food animals, requiring that farmers observe a proper amount of time between the animal’s last treatment and when it enters the food supply. Pig farmers maintain extensive records to make sure the FDA rule is followed, while keeping their pigs healthy.ⁱ

Another example of pig farmers doing what’s best for the pigs is found in a University of Missouri study,ⁱⁱ which concludes that raising pigs in barns protects them from rodents, birds, wildlife and domestic animals carrying disease. As a result, diseases once commonly found when pigs were raised outdoors are virtually non-existent today. Raising animals using the best available science and technology helps keep animals healthy to ensure that pork products are safe and wholesome.

The Pork Checkoff is also a member of Partnership for Food Safety Education, an organization dedicated to reducing the incidence of foodborne illness through consumer education. This private-public partnership works to develop greater public understanding of safe food-handling practices and other important topics, with the goal of ensuring safe pork from the farm to the dinner table.

Raising healthy pigs is a priority for pig farmers, not only because it’s the right thing to do for the pigs, but because it helps to ensure safe pork products for consumers.

ⁱ <http://www.pork.org/filelibrary/youth/foodsafety.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://extension.missouri.edu/news/DisplayStory.aspx?N=597>

Provide a Safe Work Environment

The most valuable assets on the farm are the people – family and employees. Because agriculture involves working with large machinery and animals, it can be dangerous. That is why it's a priority for everyone on the farm to support a work environment that promotes health and safety, where all employees are treated fairly and with respect.

Programs have been developed to monitor and evaluate the health of farm employees, while on-farm protocols also have been implemented to protect them. Among the most important are work methods and equipment that consistently protect the respiratory function of people who work on the farm.

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Employees also are encouraged to take rest breaks, stay hydrated, eat well-balanced meals, get plenty of sleep and wear appropriate protective gear for everyday jobs as well as for specific tasks.

The Pork Production Safety System (PPSS), a computer-based employee training program, is designed to provide safety information for those working directly with pigs, as well as farm managers and supervisors. The program includes training and materials on topics, such as preventing personal injury, regulations, confined space hazards, personal protective equipment, safe animal handling practices and more.

One of the most important aspects of producing safe, wholesome pork is making sure people who work with the animals are able to do their jobs safely. Pig farmers know the importance of providing employees the tools and knowledge they need to do the job right.

"I take a lot of pride in providing my family and employees a workplace where they feel safe. I want each of them to go home safely after a hard day's work, so I help them create and maintain a safe work environment so they can focus on raising healthy animals."

- Jill Aldous, Kerber Companies, Emmetsburg, Iowa



Contribute to the Quality of Life

“I’m proud of the role I play in our rural economy and keeping our community strong. My family and I enjoy the natural beauty of living in the country, and we want our neighbors to enjoy the outdoors, too. That’s why we’re always looking for ways to be the best neighbor we can.”

- Nick Tharp, Legan Livestock and Grain, Coatesville, Ind.

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Whether serving on the school board, volunteering for the fire department or coaching Little League, pig farmers know the importance of being good neighbors and active, responsible citizens. Respecting the time-honored, rural tradition of looking out for their communities is something pig farmers take very seriously.

Farming is not only about being a good neighbor, but also about being an economic cornerstone of rural communities. That’s why farmers are proud of the role they play in keeping rural areas strong. Pig farms in 2009 generated nearly \$21.8 billion in personal income from total sales of more than \$97 billion and added \$34.5 billion to the U.S. gross national product.ⁱ More than 800,000 jobs are made possible by pig farming.

An Iowa State University study shows a direct link between vibrant livestock farms and increased tax collections, local school enrollment, median household population and income in rural communities where few other economic development opportunities may exist.ⁱⁱ But pig farmers realize their responsibility goes well beyond providing economic stimulus – there are many quality of life issues associated with being a good neighbor.

Pig farmers know how important clean air and water are to all communities. They breathe the same air and drink the same water as their neighbors. Research funded by pig farmers provides expertise and opportunities for continued improvement on how to control the noise, odor and dust associated with agriculture. Pig farmers use this information to reduce the impact of their farms on their communities.

Farming is a privilege that must be earned and maintained. The daily practices farmers use can do just that. By showing their commitment to being a good neighbor and addressing community concerns openly and honestly, pig farmers work to gain their communities’ trust and support.

There are countless examples of how today’s pig farmers work well with their rural communities. In fact, a University of Minnesota study found that new, large livestock farms were strongly associated with higher nearby residential property values.ⁱⁱⁱ Further, areas of North Carolina that have experienced rapid pig farm growth have also seen increases in tourism.

Pig farmers of all sizes and types are dedicated to raising high-quality, safe food in an environmentally friendly and socially responsible manner. Each day, they strive to do what’s right for their employees and neighbors, their animals and the environment. Pig farmers owe it to their communities to contribute to a better quality of life for everyone.

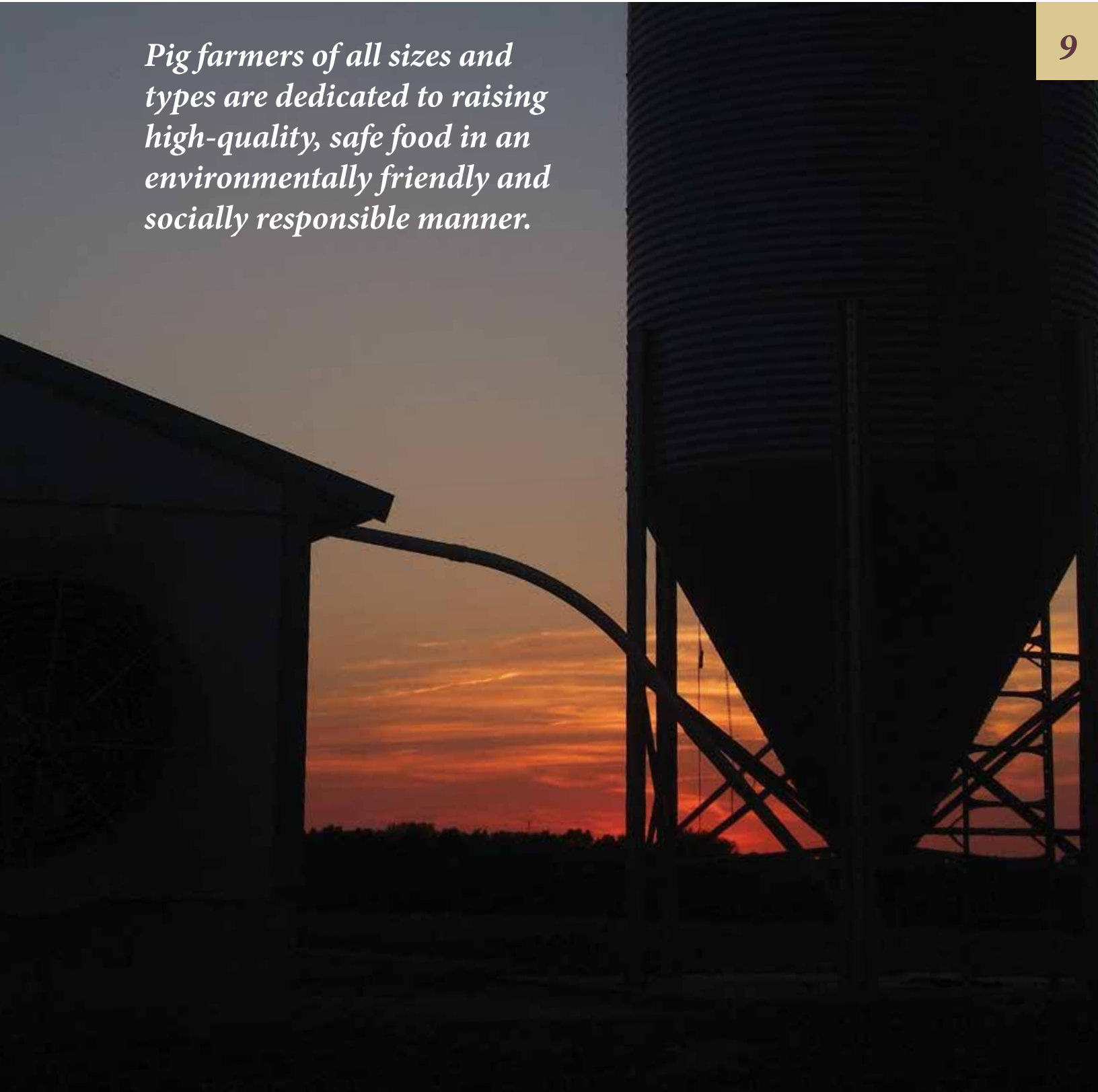
ⁱ <http://www.porkcares.org/facts.aspx>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.ag.iastate.edu/aginfo/news/2006releases/asvision.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Taff, S. J., D. G. Tiffany and S. Weisberg. 1996. “Measured effects of feedlots on residential property values in Minnesota: A report to the legislature.” Staff paper P96-12. Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota.



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FOR THE CONSUMER



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