

Chairman Thomas and ND House Ag Committee,

My name is Frank Tomac, a cattle rancher from Sioux County, Dist 31.
I am opposed to HB 1371, and here's why:

When I think of 'corporate' farming, I visualize vertical integration. Now, maybe some of the language in this bill will initially prohibit that, but it will work its way into the North Dakota system somehow.

I was at the Press Conf held on Jan 26th with Gov Burgum, Ag Comm Goehring and yourself Representative Thomas. I heard that South Dakota is doing it and it's such a great system. How many of those hog confinements are vertically integrated? I've talked with farmers there, I have cattle in a feedlot which also feeds swine. They don't own the hogs, they only feed them and get paid on how well they feed them. It's the same with the poultry barns down there, vertically integrated. The farmers don't own anything except the barns to house them. They even have to buy the feed from a local mill that's pre-fabbed.

Now since I'm not into swine, poultry or dairy, none of that should concern me. But it does.

And the reason it does, is because if the corporate farming takes hold in North Dakota, the chances of being vertical integration expands to the cattle industry.

Here's why:

The larger seedstock operators will be corporate farmers. It's highly possible that they won't allow any cattle into their feedlots unless they are with their genetics, with their shot records, with their target weights, with their complete program. If I don't fall into their protocol, I'll be forced to sell elsewhere out of state, or take a discount on the price of my cattle.

Now, this could be a worse case scenario, BUT....it could very well happen, and happen at an accelerated rate.

Another point brought up at the press conference, was how it enhanced their dying communities. Think about this; where would the work-force come from to work in these Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's)? They would come from south of the border. Do you think that would help the schools out? NO, it'll hinder them by forcing the school districts to implement more programs for the non-English speaking employees children. And with an influx of people in a community comes all the bad habits along with it, like crime and drugs and more peace officers to deal with those problems. Does those costs get offset by the CAFO's? Who pays for those extra costs?

I would love to see a Do NOT Pass recommendation from the House Ag Committee for HB 1371,
Thank You

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