

Modern Agriculture Is Militarized

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › In 2019, Iowa had 3,963 large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) – which refers to those with 1,000 animals or more – up from 789 in 1990
- › As the leader among hog-producing states, Iowa had more than 22.7 million hogs in 2017, which produce 68 billion pounds of manure annually – at least 68 times the amount of fecal waste produced by Iowa’s 3.15 million residents
- › Northwest Iowa’s watersheds are burdened by nitrate pollution – the result of unconstrained CAFO expansion
- › In December 2020, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement and Food & Water Watch sued the state for not protecting residents’ right to clean water and arguing that the increasing number of hog farms, with few pollution restrictions, were contaminating the Raccoon River with manure and fertilizer runoff
- › By acting on an individual level to be agents of change, we can all make waves that push agriculture away from industrial militarization and toward regenerative practices that have true potential to feed the world and heal the planet

If there were a prime example of all that is wrong with modern-day agriculture, Iowa would be a strong frontrunner. In 2019, the state had 3,963 large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) – which refers to those with 1,000 animals or more – up from 789 in 1990.¹ The average large hog CAFO in Iowa has at least 2,500 pigs, while some house 24,000.

As the leader among hog-producing states, Iowa had more than 22.7 million hogs in 2017, which produce 68 billion pounds of manure annually – at least 68 times the amount of fecal waste produced by Iowa’s 3.15 million residents, the Environmental Working Group reported.²

By 2021, the number of hogs in Iowa had grown to 25 million, according to an editorial by Art Cullen, editor of The Storm Lake Times,³ who noted, “To feed those hogs, we cultivate 92% of the state’s acres to grow corn and soybeans, the most of any state.”

When you add in the massive amounts of fertilizer, pesticides and waste runoff, this industrial agriculture system – which exists not only in Iowa but throughout the world – is responsible for environmental destruction and exploitation.

‘We Cannot Handle This Load’

Cullen details the atrocities of modern agriculture, which is polluting rivers and ruining water supplies. In the U.S., agriculture poses the greatest threat to water quality and is single-handedly impairing drinking water supplies across the country. The key culprits are nitrogen, phosphates and other toxins that run off from industrial cropland (i.e., genetically engineered corn and soy) and CAFOs.

In the Midwest, Iowa is at the heart of the storm, as the leader in U.S. corn and soy production and a major producer of CAFO hogs, eggs, cattle and chickens. In fact, more than 85% of Iowa’s land is used for agriculture,⁴ much of it bordering key waterways.

More than half (58%) of the rivers and streams in the state fall short of federal water quality standards, making them unsuitable for swimming and fishing, while another 23 percent are “potentially impaired.”⁵

Iowa’s Department of Natural Resources states that 92% of the nitrogen and 80% of the phosphates in waterways are the result of industrial farms and CAFOs.⁶ The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also states that manure from industrial agriculture is the primary source of nitrogen and phosphorus in U.S. waterways.⁷

The resulting damage includes an excess of nutrients that lead to algae overgrowth, depleting the water of oxygen and killing fish and other marine life in expansive dead zones.

This, combined with the excess fertilizers applied to monocrops like corn and soy, sends a steady stream of nitrogen and phosphorus to both surface and groundwater, spreading potentially disease-causing organisms and unsustainable amounts of nutrients along the way. Cullen noted:⁸

“Along with Illinois, we are contributing the most to the slow death of the Gulf of Mexico from suffocation by excess nitrogen fertilizer. We kill the weeds with cancer-causing chemicals to grow the corn that feeds the hogs that pollute the rivers, and it is an article of faith that there is nothing we can do about it.

... The legislature set it up so that nobody could keep track of the confinements or their manure plans. The state confined feeding coordinator was eliminated. Inspection occurs on complaint. That is how it is intended. There are no limits on how many hogs can come in. They just keep coming ... We cannot handle this load.”

Iowa CAFO Expansions Ruining Watersheds

Northwest Iowa’s watersheds are burdened by nitrate pollution – the result of unconstrained CAFO expansion. Areas with the highest density of livestock have the highest nutrient levels in waterways, including the Raccoon River.⁹

In December 2020, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement and Food & Water Watch sued the state for not protecting residents’ right to clean water and argued that the increasing number of hog farms, with few pollution restrictions, were contaminating the river with manure and fertilizer runoff.¹⁰ The North Raccoon watershed had 261 CAFOs in 2006, which increased to 619 in 2021.¹¹

While new CAFOs are required to have a manure management plan on file with the county, farmers are legally allowed to spread up to 240 pounds of nitrogen per acre,

which is 70% more nitrogen than most corn crops need.¹² According to Cullen, “The agricultural industrial complex, tightly intertwined by chemistry to the military one ... leaves farmer, laborer, land and community as assets to be exploited. That is what has happened in Iowa.”¹³

In 1949, Iowan Aldo Leopold published an essay titled, “The Land Ethic,” which calls on people to be morally responsible for the natural world.¹⁴

“Everything he suggested came true: The rivers have lost their former lives, the soil is washing down them and in dominating the landscape we diminish ourselves. He suggested that we live as citizens of the land rather than over it,” Cullen said.¹⁵ But while efforts to [support regenerative agriculture](#) are growing, there are still many hurdles standing in the way.

Gates Ag One: Digital Farming

While pretending to save the world through philanthropy, Bill Gates is entering every field that has to do with sustaining life but, for over a decade, has undermined vitality in all its forms, in an effort to seize control over and profit from it. In my interview with Vandana Shiva, Ph.D., she spoke about [Gates Ag One](#),¹⁶ which is headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, where Monsanto is also headquartered.

“Gates Ag One is one [type of] agriculture for the whole world, organized top down. He’s written about it. We have a whole section on it in our new report,¹⁷ ‘Gates to a Global Empire,’” she said. This includes digital farming, in which farmers are surveilled and mined for their agricultural data, which is then repackaged and sold back to them.

So far, Shiva’s organization has managed to prevent Gates from introducing a seed surveillance startup, where farmers would not be allowed to grow seeds unless approved by Gates’ surveillance system. The data mining, Shiva says, is needed because they don’t actually know agriculture.

This is why Gates finances the policing of farmers. He needs to mine their data to learn how farming is actually done. This knowledge is then repackaged and sold back to the

farmers. It's evil genius at its finest.

Through his funding, Gates now also controls the world's seed supply, and his financing of gene editing research has undercut biosafety laws across the world. As explained by Shiva, the only country that doesn't have biosafety laws is the U.S. "The rest of the world does because we have a treaty called the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety," she says.

"While he created the appearance of philanthropy, what he's doing is giving tiny bits of money to very vital institutions. But with those bits of money, they attract government money, which was running those institutions. Now, because of his clout, he is taking control of the agenda of these institutions. In the meantime, he's pushing patenting, be it on drugs, vaccines or on seeds."

UN Food Summit Bowing Down to Corporate Technology

Gates is also tied to the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, which hundreds of **farmers and human rights groups are boycotting** due to its domination by corporate interests. The Summit claims it is convening to "launch bold new actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food,"¹⁸ but critics say it favors agribusiness interests, elite foundations and the exploitation of African food systems.¹⁹

Agnes Kalibata, the former Rwandan agriculture minister who is now the president of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), an organization funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation,²⁰ was appointed as the event's head.

AGRA is essentially a Gates Foundation subsidiary, and while some of its projects appear to be beneficial, most of its goals are centered on promoting biotechnology and chemical fertilizers. AGRA was launched in 2006 with funding from the Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation.

After more than a decade, AGRA's influence has significantly worsened the situation in the 18 African nations targeted by this "philanthropic" endeavor. Hunger under AGRA's direction increased by 30% and rural poverty rose dramatically.²¹

Shiva has also traveled the globe to warn other countries, including those in Africa, about plans to displace rural farmers so investors can turn the land into industrial farms to export the commodities. She said:²²

"A handful of multinational corporations ... is driving species extinction. The poisons they have deployed are pushing the disappearance of bees, the disappearance of pollinators, the disappearance of insects, the disappearance of biodiversity.

Industrial agriculture is not only destroying biodiversity, it is destroying the soil and releasing large amounts of greenhouse gasses to the atmosphere ... This is not a food system. It is not an ecological system. It is a recipe for destruction of the planet's health and the destruction of our health."

Living With the Land Is Key

Regenerative agriculture and animal husbandry are the next and higher stages of organic food and farming – free from toxic pesticides, GMOs, chemical fertilizers and CAFOs, and regenerative in terms of the health of the soil, the environment, the animals and rural farmers.

As Shiva put it, "Regenerative agriculture provides answers to the soil crisis, the food crisis, the climate crisis, and the crisis of democracy."²³ Cullen is also hopeful that positive change is at hand even in Iowa:²⁴

"[W]e have an opportunity to return to an ethos that can sustain us. The conversation is changing to how we can live with the land. Corn yields and pork production have increased fantastically over the past half-century. Yet we have demeaned ourselves in the process.

... Leopold's Land Ethic has a chance, and it could bring back so much that has died from an anti-life system built for the profit of a few, taken from the many ... Farmers all over Iowa are finding that path again by adapting sustainable practices as they can."

On a small scale, you can help by supporting your local organic and regenerative farmers by purchasing their goods at local farmers markets or purchasing your meat and dairy products directly from your local farm. A growing number of homeowners are also converting their yards into edible landscaping using organic and regenerative methods.

By acting on an individual level to be agents of change, we can all make waves that push agriculture away from industrial militarization and toward regenerative practices that have true potential to feed the world and heal the planet.

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