Addressing the True Impacts of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

The following organizations support the information and recommendations outlined in this document:

- **Center for Rural Affairs**
- **Clean Water Action**
- **Ecumenical Ministries of Iowa**
- **Global Resource Action Center for the Environment (GRACE)**
- **Iowa Citizen Action Network**
- **Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church**
- **Iowa Environmental Council**
- **Iowa Farmers Union**
- **National Catholic Rural Life Conference**
- **1000 Friends of Iowa**
- **Peace and Justice Action Network, Catholic Diocese of Sioux City**
- **Rural Life Office, Catholic Archdiocese of Dubuque**
- **Sharing Help Awareness United Network (SHAUN)**
- **Sierra Club**
- **Social Concerns/Rural Life Department, Catholic Charities, Catholic Diocese of Sioux City**
- **Women, Food, and Agriculture Network**

"With reference either to individual or national welfare,

agriculture is of primary importance."

-George Washington

Agriculture is critical to the overall well-being of any democratic nation. In Iowa, agriculture traditionally has been the foundation not only of our economy, but also our culture. Today, large agribusiness corporations have used political power and externalization of costs to put independent family farmers out of business, extract wealth from rural communities, and disregard the quality and health of our environment. Independent farming, which was once a sustainable economic foundation for rural communities, is rapidly being made dependent on large agribusiness corporations for supplies and stock. Iowa is ripe for a leader with vision and courage to speak honestly about agriculture's problems and propose life-saving solutions.

Attitudes in Iowa toward the industrialization of agriculture are best exemplified in a statewide poll conducted in January 2003 by GOP pollster Hill Research Consultants of The Woodlands, Texas. They found 94 percent of Iowans believed the issue of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) was important. **In fact, 74 percent of Iowans polled believed there should be a moratorium on CAFOs, with over 60 percent of Republicans and over 80 percent of Democrats holding this belief.**

Impact on Iowa and the Nation

Iowans' assessment of industrialized livestock production is clear. CAFOs negatively impact the three most important aspects of their lives:

*the farm economy in which they earn their livelihoods

*the communities in which they interact and raise their families

*the natural environment that defines their quality of life

Addressing the True Impacts of
Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

**Commonsense governmental action would help to correct
the negative impacts on economics, communities, and our environment.**

*RESTORATION OF CAPITALISM TO AGRICULTURE

Industrial agriculture fosters a concentration in market power where today just four corporations control approximately 60 percent of the pork market and over 80 percent of the beef market. Loss of access to markets and accurate market information has resulted in the elimination of independent farmers and rural businesses.

Without fair and open markets determining pricing through competing buyers and consumer demand, independent farmers are being forced to assume an employee role. They produce livestock in accordance with the controlling corporate dictates, not the competitive capitalist system.

Simple solutions exist to restore capitalism:

- Ban ownership of livestock by meat packers

- Enforce Section 202 of the Packers and Stockyards Act

- Require that a daily percentage of meatpacker purchases come from a competitively-bid market

- Require fair production contracts for contract growers

- Enact effective payment limitations in the federal farm program for commodity supports

*RESTORATION OF COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

Extraction agriculture destroys rural communities in Iowa and across the nation. Rather than enriching communities, agribusiness exports community wealth to distant corporate headquarters.

As far back as 1946, a report to the U.S. Senate described a lower standard of living and quality of life in rural communities dominated by large-scale industrial agriculture. A 2001 study showed that where corporate agribusiness is restricted, communities have a higher percentage of farms showing cash gains, lower poverty levels, and lower unemployment. As farm size and absentee ownership increase, social conditions in the local community deteriorate. The number of independent farmers raising livestock in rural areas is more important to the economic well-being of communities than the number of livestock produced.

Commonsense policy must:

- Target rural community development to small business and self-employment

- Reverse the depopulation of rural areas and provides incentives for rural residence and entrepreneurship

- Fairly implement Country of Origin Labeling

- Give local governments decision-making authority to site – or not site - CAFOs in their communities

*RESTORATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Industrialized agriculture is an extraction business that externalizes its social and environmental costs onto communities. Degradation of water quality, air quality and public health results in a diminished quality of life.

American agriculture must be a sustainable system dependent on renewable resources and responsible behavior. Industrialized agriculture, including CAFOs, does not meet these requirements and thereby requires regulatory response:

- Require all CAFOs to comply with existing environmental laws that regulate other polluting industries

- Maintain and fully fund enforcement of clean water and clean air regulations

- Hold livestock integrators accountable and legally liable for the environmental damages associated with CAFOs

- Prohibit public funds that subsidize CAFOs for waste systems

This document was written by Iowa organizations in July of 2003.

The statewide poll referred to on page 1 was commissioned in January 2003 by The Humane Society of the United States' Care4Iowa Campaign.