

State Series: Consolidation and the American Family Farm – North Dakota

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Executive Summary

The combination of agriculture consolidation and wealth extraction from rural communities has left fewer opportunities for the next generation of farmers and ranchers in North Dakota. Corporate influence over trade groups, policymakers, and regulatory bodies has led to advantages for multinational companies and continued to squeeze family farms. This brief shows some of the national trends, while tying in specific policy concerns facing North Dakota farmers and ranchers.

Key findings include:

- The state of family farms and economic outlook for North Dakota farmers showed several concerning facts:
 - Young farmers only make up a tenth all farmers;
 - Since 2009, farmers have seen their statewide average cropland cost per acre increase from \$787 to \$2,000 in 2017;
 - The average product sold per farm in 2012 among all farmers was \$353,600 while for women farmers it was \$42,200, and average per farm government payments received is half, \$7,500 less, for women farmers than for all farmers.
- In light of vulnerabilities and attacks on the North Dakota corporate farming ban, an increase in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) has taken place even after a report commissioned over a decade ago by the North Dakota Office of the Attorney General warned of the valid public concerns around corporate farming and CAFOs.
- Many factors are leading to declines across agriculture, but agriculture concentration has led to less competition and the ability of larger operations to weather tough times, as evidenced by North Dakota hog and pig sales among smaller farms seeing more than a three-fourths drop in sales while larger farms only saw sales drop by less than half during the same period.
- A lack of slaughter facilities further restricts market competition and depending on geographic location to certain facilities (i.e. USDA and state inspected facilities) can add costs to ranchers trying to sell their product. North Dakota only has 18 USDA certified and 13 state inspected slaughter facilities left; while 85-90 custom exempt slaughter facilities are found in the state, those facilities do not allow ranchers to resell what they produce.
- The brief concludes that protections are needed for ownership rights and autonomy for farmers to repair their farm equipment, where companies like John Deere have said that farmers don't own their equipment in the traditional sense of ownership.