



**TAKE  
ACTION!**



by **Mike Callicrate**

# What can we as eaters do to encourage a better food system?

## **B**AIT AND SWITCH

In today's broken corporate-controlled food system, more and more people want to know where their food comes from and how it's produced. The biggest industrial food companies are well aware of this fact and clearly see how consumer demand has shifted towards local sourcing of food over other attributes like antibiotic and hormone free.

The world's biggest food companies, including meat packers, processors, food distributors and retailers are carefully strategizing on new ways to capture this growing "local" food market, intending to head off all possibilities of being replaced by local, regionally based food systems that better

serve farmers, eaters, the environment, and rural communities.

Recently, I stopped by a restaurant in Birmingham, Alabama, with a couple of friends. Looking up "local food" on a smart phone, a little barbeque restaurant popped up. It was everything we wanted, so we pulled off the interstate and went in. Pictures of farmers, kids and pigs living the happy farm life decorated the walls. From the décor to the food on the customers' plates all looked and felt great! As the server approached the table, I simply asked the question, "Where do you get your pork?" and he said, "We get it from a local farmer north of town." I responded,

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**They just change the label - same crap, but in a different box!**



# *Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*

By Henry Alford, 1844

*Come, ye thankful people, come,  
raise the song of harvest home;  
all is safely gathered in,  
ere the winter storms begin,  
God, our Maker doth provide  
for our wants to be supplied;  
come to God's own temple, come,  
raise the song of harvest home.*

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"Great, who is it?" The guy said, "Well, I don't know," so I asked him to find out. Returning from the kitchen, he said, "I'm really sorry I told you that the pork was local. It's Smithfield pork." Smithfield is the largest pork company in the world, owned by the Chinese.

On another occasion while looking for local food in Colorado, a good food advocate friend and I stopped by a brewery on Main Street in Alamosa. Upon opening the menu, I was pleased to see local suppliers prominently featured. Beef was supplied by Salazar Meats and pork was from Monte Vista-based Gosar Sausage. The Salazar hamburger had a \$2 upcharge, which I was happy to pay. A quick phone search for Salazar Meats connected me to owner Lucas Salazar. "Lucas, this is Mike Callicrate. I'm at the Brewery in Alamosa, do you sell them meat?" and he said, "No."

The young server, standing by, appeared embarrassed, but also had a look of disappointment, as if he hadn't known the truth. I said, "You gotta tell me, what would I have been served if I had ordered the Salazar hamburger?" After another trip to the kitchen, he informed me that a pre-made burger patty from Sysco would have been on the plate. Sysco provides a product as far opposite of Salazar Meats as is possible.

Sysco, the biggest, most predatory and deceptive food service company in the world, sells the cheapest meat for the most profit. The burger I would have been served would have been industrially produced, partially or mostly imported. It would have likely contained DNA from over 1,000 animals, along with Lean Finely Textured Beef (aka LFTB or "Pink Slime").

Too bad the destruction of our farm and ranch communities or the abuse of ani

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FROM THE

# PRESIDENT

## Are We Willing to Let the American Family Farmer Become Extinct? by Mike Weaver



**T**hat is a question every American who eats needs to be asking themselves. We are at the tipping point now and if the American public doesn't help us stop Big Ag and the multi-national corporations who run agriculture in this country, and indeed worldwide, the extinction of the American Family Farmer is eminent.

Fully over 1 million family farms have disappeared since the mid 1980s. The mega corporations, many foreign owned, have forced small farmers out of business or into one sided contract production that leaves little for the farmer.

Poultry production in this country is 100% vertically integrated which means the companies control everything from the egg to the grocery cart.

Pork is approximately 90% contract meaning the corporations control pork production.

Dairy is run by giant "cooperatives" meaning the companies and farmers aren't

making the cost of production.

Beef is about 80% vertically integrated and getting more concentrated every day. The giant corporations like JBS and Tyson are forcing beef cattle producers into production contracts or face having no market in which to sell their cows.

So the big question every American has to ask themselves is "Do you want your food produced by family farmers who care about the animals, land, water, and air or giant corporations that only care about making huge profits?"

The larger effect is that the giant multi-national mega corporations are

drawing all the wealth out of our rural communities and sending it to Wall Street. So instead of putting a fair share of your food dollar into the farmers hands where it will be spent locally on hardware, vehicles, school taxes, and buying local it is lining the pockets of the already rich.

Help us stem the tide and take back our food system for the good of your kids and the American people.

Check out our website at [www.competitivemarkets.com](http://www.competitivemarkets.com) to view all of the issues we are currently addressing and join us today or renew your membership. We need your help.<sup>MW</sup>

**“Do you want your food produced by family farmers who care about the animals, land, water, and air or giant corporations that only care about making huge profits?”**

**CALLICRATE** (continued from page 2)

imals and meat plant workers isn't reflected in the taste of the food. Too bad we can't simultaneously experience the loss of rural communities or the degradation of the environment when we bite into ethically compromised food items.

Unfortunately, while our government looks the other way, Sysco and other national food companies find it very profitable to deceive the consumer. Just change the label - same crap, but in a different box!

Farm-to-table and the local food movement has been hijacked by Big Food. If the consuming public wants the chance to

vote for a better food system by how they spend their food dollar, they will have to be more knowledgeable and willing to ask tough questions of restaurants and retailers, and all of us will have to be willing to call out the cheaters and insist they be held accountable.<sup>MC</sup>

# The Tragedy of Unbroken Trusts

by Renae B. Vander Schaaf

It had been a long day on the Tyler Farm in July of 1890. The summer heat had set in early; the Tylers had spent an exhausting day hoeing their corn crop by hand. They were resting on the porch for a few minutes before retiring for the day. The cooler night breeze felt good. Bullfrogs were heard as the stars were becoming more visible.

John Tyler said to his wife, Matilda, "I read in the paper today that President Benjamin Harrison has signed the Act to Protect Trade and Commerce against Unlawful Restraints and Monopolies."

"As farmers become fewer and fewer in number, and our dependence on the money these agricultural powerhouses charge or pay us, it becomes definitely more difficult to even retain what independence we have."

"That's good," said Matilda, rocking their infant son. "That way John Jr. won't have to deal with monopolies when selling crops or purchasing needed supplies."

"Perhaps the price of sugar will come down," said Matilda. "We won't have to make as much sorghum each fall."

"We'll see," said John.

They went to bed that night, envisioning how this legislative act we know as the Sherman Anti-Trust Act was going to prohibit mo-

nopolization of markets and consolidation of businesses. Even before the Civil War, corporate monopolies were growing. Wealthier industrialists were buying legislators' votes.

Americans were becoming very concerned by the concentration of investment capital held by large corporations. One of the enticements for early immigrants to make the perilous ocean journey to America was the free market economic system. They knew far too well the tyranny when money capital and political power was held in too few of hands.

The idea behind the Sherman Act was good, but there was no real effort by the government to enforce it. It didn't matter that Standard Oil Trust controlled about 85% of the total output of petroleum in the United States. It simply reorganized.

Five years after its passage, the Supreme Court really mocked the Act by ruling that the American Sugar Refining Company had not violated the Act. Even though it controlled approximately 98% of all sugar refined in the United States of America, the Court did not believe that this affected the price of sugar one iota. Really!!

True, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act has been used throughout our country's history at times, especially in regards to economic freedom. But it is not enforced as it should

be. Later it was deemed that there were good and bad trusts—if a trust did not misuse its power, it could continue. That judgment was in the hands of the government. (Yeah—unbiased, right?)

I think that the Tylers would be in shock and utter dismay if they were to see what little effect this Act has had on maintaining a competitive free market system. Any descendent of theirs that might still be on a farm is affected by this lack of competition, whether in purchasing or selling.

Think of it when you are placing your unbelievably high priced seed orders, who gets a percentage of almost every bag sold? Even something as simple and minute as the seeds for growing a garden is becoming more and more in the hands of a few.

Is it a whole lot different when it comes to the fertilizer put on the land?

Perhaps you say the bulk of your fertilizer comes from livestock. Well, that is probably where you see the monopoly the most. Almost all livestock is vertically integrated. The cattle market is owned by the "Big Four" packers: Tyson, Cargill (Excel), JBS-Brazil and National Beef. If the laws already in place had been enforced, this would never have happened.

As farmers become fewer and fewer in number, and our dependence on the money these agricultural powerhouses charge or pay us, it becomes definitely more difficult to even retain what independence we have. There is always a clause to terminate the contract if a complaint or question is raised by the farmer, therefore ending the needed paycheck.

In a way, we have become slaves to industries that we grew.<sup>RVS</sup>

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Renae B. Vander Schaaf is a farmer's wife. She has authored several books, enjoys gardening and rural life. Contact her at [agripen@live.com](mailto:agripen@live.com).

# Introducing the Open Markets Institute

by Barry Lynn

Last summer my Open Markets antimonopoly team was kicked out of our long-time home at the New America think tank in Washington. Our great offense? We had criticized Google for the ways in which they

**The one thing most important lesson was the value of standing and fighting even in the face of overwhelming numbers of enemies.**

exploit the monopoly power they have captured over key bottlenecks in the American economy, including the flow of information, news, and ideas. Google threatened

to cut off its support for New America, and the leadership there buckled under the pressure.

Many of you read about our story when it first broke in late August, on the front page of *The New York Times*, and many of you reached out then or in the weeks since. The support we received from our friends and allies at OCM has been an especially important source of strength for everyone on our team. That's because you all understand exactly what we were going through, from your own experiences fighting power year after year.

The good news is that today we are stronger than ever. We are up and running as the independent Open Markets Institute, we have new offices a block from the White House, we have raised enough support to ensure that our entire team of eight people will be able to keep riding against monopoly for at least the next year, and we have big plans to grow. We will continue to do everything we were doing – including publishing Leah Douglas's *Food & Power* newsletter – and a lot more as well.

Even better, the story of our expulsion had a huge effect both in the press and on Capitol Hill. Reporters published hundreds of articles about our team, in every

major newspaper and news magazine in America, and across Europe as well. Senators and members of Congress from both parties – from Oren Hatch to Elizabeth Warren – have reached out and offered their support. Google wanted us silenced, but our voice is louder and stronger than ever.

We will be able to use that voice not only to fight the big tech corporations that threaten our democracy, but to help the members of OCM fight the big ag corporations that threaten independent farmers and ranchers still holding out in America's heartland.

More than 15 years ago, when I first began to research monopolization in America, I discovered there was only one group in all America fighting the concentration of economic power – OCM. In the years since, I've learned a great deal from Fred Stokes, Mike Callicrate, Joe Maxwell, Mike Weaver, Bill and Judy Heffernan, John Hanson, and every other member of the OCM family. The one thing most important lesson was the value of standing and fighting even in the face of overwhelming numbers of enemies.

The battles ahead won't be easy. The folks that have taken hold of the levers of power in our nation won't let go willingly. But from the day I started working along side my friends at OCM, I have known for a certainty that we will have our country back. Today I am sure the final victory will come sooner than any of us ever expected.

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MEMBERSHIP

*Report*

Another year has gone by and your 2018 OCM Membership renewals will be due in January. Watch for OCM President Weaver's letter and invoice to be mailed at the end of December. Because our printing costs continue to rise, next year we are implementing a plan for our newsletter to be sent electronically whenever possible. We will be asking for email addresses to start this process, but if that does not work for you, you can still ask to receive the newsletter by mail. Thank you for your support and membership this year and we look forward to another great year for OCM!

Thank you and Happy Holidays!

# CAPITOL ROUNDUP



## **GIPSA AND PACKERS & STOCKYARDS ACT**

During October and November, family farmers and ranchers took two heavy blows from USDA Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. First, Secretary Perdue withdrew the Grain Inspection, Packers & Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) Farmer Fair Practices Rules that would have established a list of practices that violate the Packers & Stockyards Act and lowered the bar for producers of poultry and other livestock to sue meatpacking or processing companies for unfair, predatory and retaliatory practices.

Weeks later, Perdue eliminated the GIPSA office altogether. GIPSA had been a standalone agency that was charged with enforcing the farmer marketplace safeguards contained in the Packers & Stockyards Act of 1921. Adding insult to injury, Perdue has assigned the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) with the responsibility of overseeing the Packers & Stockyards Act. AMS is the agency responsible for overseeing the \$750,000,000 in checkoff taxes. OCM has been fighting in the courts for the last three

years to get AMS to release the financial records showing how the beef checkoff tax funds have been spent. We are concerned that AMS would not adequately enforce market safeguards that would protect family farmers against abusive corporate practices by the very industry that seems to be controlling AMS.

## **BAYER-MONSANTO MEGA-MERGER**



In early November, OCM and more than 80 other farm organizations sent a letter to President Trump calling on him to undo Secretary Perdue's injustice and implement the GIPSA Farmer Fair Practices Rules.

On November 14, OCM co-hosted a standing-room-only audience at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., working

to educate the press and policy leaders on the impact of monopoly power and helping them understand the tragic harm the proposed Bayer-Monsanto mega-merger would cause. We moderated a panel discussion featuring National Family Farm Coalition, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, R-CALF USA, Friends of the Earth, Open Markets Institute, and Consumer Federation of America.

The same day, OCM joined with Center of Food Safety and others to deliver more than 1 million petitions to the Department of Justice opposing the Bayer-Monsanto merger. You can still add your voice by calling the DOJ comment line at 202-353-1555 and sharing your concerns. We have a list of talking points on our webpage at [www.competitivemarkets.com/stophemmerger](http://www.competitivemarkets.com/stophemmerger).

## **CHECKOFF PROGRAM REFORM**

With the House Agriculture Chair announcing the House version of the Farm Bill has been drafted and sitting in a "vault" to be debated in late January or February, it is time we began to push every U.S. member of Congress and U.S. Senator to sign on to co-sponsor the two federal checkoff program reform bills that have been filed. Our aim is to have this legislation included as an amendment to the Farm Bill.

While your members of Congress and U.S. Senators are home for the various holi-



day breaks, please reach out to their district and state offices and ask for a meeting to discuss checkoff reform. To help you prepare

for the meeting go to [www.competitivemarkets.com/stopcheckoffabuse](http://www.competitivemarkets.com/stopcheckoffabuse) and learn more about The Fairness in Farming (OFF) Act. S. 741 and H.R. 1753 and the Voluntary Checkoff Act S. 740 and H.R. 1752. If you do not have time to set up a meeting then just let them know over the phone why you are calling, and remember to ask them to co-sponsor the bills.

This effort is vital. We will not end the abuse without you taking the time to let your elected officials know how you feel about the check-off programs. Let us know that you did reach out to your member of Congress and U.S. Senators so we can drop by their offices in Washington D.C. and follow up after they return in January.

#### **H.R. 3599, PROTECT INTERSTATE COMMERCE ACT; CONGRESSMAN KING (R) IOWA**

As we reported in our last newsletter, Congressman King is once again trying to stop any state from passing labeling laws and commodity protection measures. This bill fulfills industrial agriculture's interest in stopping family farmers from differentiating their products in the market and will prevent states from taking action to stop the harm caused by large corporations such as the Dicamba drift. We are keeping our eye on this effort hoping to stop it from becoming part of the new Farm Bill. This is a fight to preserve state's rights; our rights.



## **Oklahoma Cattle Producers Defeat Beef Checkoff Referendum**



In November of 2017, Oklahoma farmers and ranchers won a great victory against the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association (OCA) and their corporate out-of-state interests by defeating a proposal to double the beef checkoff tax in the state. The referendum was defeated in a vote of 1998 to 2506.

OCM and R-CALF USA members had joined together to lead the opposition to the referendum. In spite of the inherent conflict of interest, Oklahoma's Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry had granted OCA, the lead organization pushing for the passage of the Oklahoma beef checkoff increase, the exclusive right to administer the election process and vote.

Our members had filed an application with the Oklahoma Supreme Court, out-

lining a series of constitutional and legal irregularities relating to both the petition signature gathering and election processes. Based on the court's procedural rules, the plaintiffs will dismiss their case now that they have won the referendum.

Oklahoma farmer and OCM board member Paul Muegge said, "I knew we had to stand up to OCA. They are nothing more than the modern-day cattle barons trying to ride rough shod over family farmers and ranchers and using our government to do so."

We were proud to stand with our Oklahoma members to ensure justice was carried out during this election. It is good to know that in America, if you stand up for what is right you can still win.



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*Thank you.*