



## SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COALITION

110 Maryland Avenue N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002  
www.msawg.org

Phone 202.547.5754  
Fax 202.547.1837

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 16, 2002

Contact: Martha Noble (202) 547-5754

### **Coalition Finds EPA Animal Factory Rule Slap in Face to Rural Residents and Communities**

Washington, DC -- The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition charged that the revised Clean Water Act regulation for concentrated animal feeding operations, released today by the U.S. EPA, will hinder rather than help rural residents and communities in their struggle to deal with water pollution from animal factory operations.

"EPA has ignored its 30-year old legal authority and responsibility under the Clean Water Act by failing to take adequate measures to protect the nation's waters from a flood of manure, antibiotics, pathogens, and other pollutants emanating from large-scale animal factories," said Martha Noble, senior policy analyst for the Coalition. "The agency has handed animal factories a license to pollute instead of fashioning a permit to prevent and control pollution."

The revised regulation's biggest omission is the failure to include enforceable federal measures to prevent animal factory waste from running off the land where it is applied. "This failure is a huge step backwards," said Noble. "Federal courts have clearly recognized that EPA has the legal duty to control animal factory waste runoff from land application sites. Yet the revised regulation has no enforceable federal measures for dealing with land applications - it merely requires CAFO operators to write up a nutrient plan which they can then stick into a drawer and ignore. EPA has actually provided animal factory operators with a significant new shield against Clean Water Act enforcement by setting up this empty shell of a land application plan."

The newly revised CAFO regulation also perpetuates another exemption from enforcement. Existing animal factories can continue to discharge waste from handling and storage facilities during a 25-year, 24-hour storm event. "This exemption virtually guarantees that the nation's rivers and streams will continue to be degraded by catastrophic spills of millions of gallons of liquid waste from enormous septic lagoon systems and by the leaching of pollutants from tons of piled-up poultry waste," according to Noble.

The regulation also fails to hold liable as co-permittees large meat and poultry processing corporations which contract with animal factory operators. In their contracts with the operators, these corporations often specify the size and design of the CAFOs. In many cases, these corporations own the animals but they leave responsibility for dealing with the waste on the growers and the public. "A handful of large corporations are walking away with record profits and leaving the rest of us to pay for the mess left behind," said Noble.

The revised regulation is also a slap in the face to those farmers and ranchers who raise animals in sustainable production systems that are designed to avoid or minimize environmental degradation. Many of these sustainable producers are taking their own steps to process and market meat and poultry. Now, EPA has issued a regulation that will continue to require them to compete at a disadvantage with large-scale CAFOs which impose the costs of cleaning polluted drinking water and recreational waters on the taxpayer.

"EPA, which has taken years on this revised regulation, has squandered an opportunity to promote and encourage environmentally sound animal production. We can do better in the United States than raise animals under squalid conditions in facilities that pollute and degrade our water and air," said Noble.

The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition represents farm, rural, and conservation organizations that advocate public policies supporting the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities.