

Welcome and Conference Overview

Dr. Lauren Christian
Director, Iowa Pork Industry Center
Iowa State University

Lauren Christian joined the ISU animal science department in 1965. He holds major responsibility for ISU's swine teaching and research herds, and he is a well-known consultant and lecturer on swine production. His research interests include swine breeding and management with an emphasis on stress adaptation, breeding systems, selection methods, disease resistance, and body composition. He earned his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

We'd like to recognize the sponsors for this event: the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the Iowa Pork Industry Center at Iowa State University, Iowa State University Extension, the Iowa Pork Producers Association, and the Beginning Farmer Center here at ISU. I would also like to introduce the planning committee to you. Many of the members are in the audience today: Jerry DeWitt, representing ISU Extension; Mike Duffy, who is also affiliated with ISU Extension, the Beginning Farmer Center, and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture; also Rich Degner, who is not with us today because he's headed for Japan. Rich served on the committee as a representative of the Iowa Pork Producers Association. Mark Honeyman is with the ISU Animal Science Department; Jeri Neal, research coordinator, represented the Leopold Center along with Rich Pirog, who is the education coordinator for the Center. We are certainly appreciative of the efforts of the planning committee in putting together this unique program. I would also like to introduce Anne Larson, communications specialist at the Leopold Center, for her special efforts in helping to plan and promote this conference.

I was asked to make some introductory comments about some of the changes taking place in the industry. I go back a number of years, and many of you may have had me as an instructor for Pork Production class. Many years ago in an old feed magazine I came across a poem, and as you can probably tell it's been around a while. Being a slow learner, I haven't quite learned to recite it totally. But it expresses better than I can what the pig might think of some of the changes that are taking place in the industry. The poem appeared in a swine feed promotional magazine, and the author was unknown. It was titled *The Hog's View*. I would like to share the poem with you this morning to set the stage for this conference (next page).

A Hog's View

(Author Unknown)

We used to live in mud and grime,
And had ourselves the grandest time.
'Twas nothing that would please my soul
Like lolling in the old mud hole.

Our life was long in days of yore,
We stayed around for a year or more.
Our bedroom was the finest style
Sleeping in the old straw pile.

We always had a lot of fun—
They gave us plenty of room to run.
It really was a joy to be
A hog in 1923.

But filthy lucre and man's greed thereof
Is taking from us the life we love.
Our life on earth will not be the same
And there's nobody but the Hog Men to blame.

The people have a place, you see,
That's called "The University."
They sit around and dream all day
On how to make swine systems pay.

They used to make us nice and fat,
And I say nothing wrong in that.
We got real fat in thighs and butts,
And now they talk of primal cuts.

I remember well that fateful day
Some research guy said, "feed them hay."
Then an engineer from another school
Took us from our swimming pool.

He said, "I know you'll save some dough
And surely keep your feed costs low.
By putting hogs on hard cement"—
And adding to our sad lament.

And then some psychopathic fool
Picks out the spot where we should stool.
The latest is the declaration
That we must face insemination.

We suppose it's because those meat-type boars
Keep stepping through the slatted floors.
Changes . . . changes constantly;
But none that's good for the pig family.

With every change it's plain to see
We're slowly losing our liberty.
It may be that the system pays,
But please give us back the good old days.

With tears in eyes, on bended knees,
Please give us back our liberties.

Additional verses follow:

They built for us a fancy place
And have us each six feet of space.
And for a bed (and I am sore)
From sleeping on a slatted floor.

And then there's the banker who furnishes dough
To make this fancy hog business go.
He calls the farmer—keeps pushing them through
As I told you before, your note is past due.

And to add to our problems, the Ecologist fears
We can't survive for many more years.
They call it pollution—disposal of waste—
The product of man getting wealthy in haste.

With the technology man forces on us
We're really disturbed and we should make a fuss.
But coming events cast their shadow before
And it sounds like we won't be in slavery no more.

'Cause my friend, Arnold Zwiffle, who was on TV
Had wonderful news in his letter to me.
He just passed the word and it now is official—
That man can make hams that are artificial.

And there's bacon, too, Arnold says it's just fine
That is made from soybeans and not from swine.
So with rapture and shouts, our hearts filled with glee,
'Cause man eats synthetics—not Arnold and me.

I'd read the poem several times to beginning classes in Pork Production, when one day a student came up after class and asked if I knew who had written that poem. I said, "No, but I would surely like to know." "Well, " he said, "it was my father." His father was a farmer from the southern Minnesota town of Lewistown. He asked if I would like to have another verse or two and I said, "Of course." So he gave me those additional verses. Now I would like to reinforce some of the things that have taken place. I don't need to tell this group that the pig industry is one of the most important value-added industries we have in the United States today. And it has been vital to the upper Midwest. Through the years, approximately 78% of all the pigs have been produced in the north-central region of this country. In the center of the north-central region is our state of Iowa. And through the years it has produced somewhere in the neighborhood of 24% to 27% of the pigs in this country. In fact, ten years ago this was the ranking of the top five states:

Iowa	27%
Illinois	10%
Minnesota	8%
Indiana	8%
Nebraska	7%

You'll notice that there's one state that's not included in that top five. Ten years ago, the state of North Carolina was barely in the top ten. Integration and contract feeding have increased pork production in that state at a remarkable rate, and now they are strongly in second position, producing approximately half or slightly more than half as many pigs as we produce on our state. Pork production is vital to the economy of this state and others surrounding us. Therefore, it is critical that pork production be kept in this state and be profitable for our pork producers as an important value-added industry. The Pork Alliance, together here with people at ISU, have compiled statistics to document the magnitude and economic impact of this industry:

PORK IN IOWA

Magnitude

29,000 producers
 25 million pigs marketed
 \$2.74 billion in sales
 26.5% of all ag products
 48.8% of livestock value
 25% of U.S. total

PORK IN IOWA

Economic Impact

92,000 jobs (1 of every 16)

\$12 billion economic output

- \$2.74 billion pig value
- \$5.45 billion packing/processing
- \$3.84 billion goods and services

Of course we're proud of the fact that 25% of U.S. production is centered here in the state. It accounts for about one in every 16 jobs in Iowa. And when we multiply this it accounts for nearly \$12 billion in economic output. It's not just the price of the pigs and the dollars that go to the farmer and that are spent in the rural community. It also involves about \$5.5 billion dollars annually in the packing and processing industry and about \$3.4 billion related to the feed industry—the associated industries of livestock equipment that make this whole business go.

EXPANSION IN IOWA?

Economic development of rural Iowa

- Value-added industry
- Our last livestock industry?

Doing what we do best: agriculture

- By-product utilization

We have the resources:

- Class A land
- Abundant corn and soybean production
- Existing packing industry
- Expertise (technology)
- Existing infrastructure

So it's very important that we keep pig production in this state. And hopefully there are ways that producers of all sizes can be competitive. It's very appropriate that expansion of pork production take place here, because it is very important to the economic development of rural Iowa. It is one of our most important value-added industries, as the above figures document, and one we can ill afford to lose the way we lost the beef-cattle feeding industry. It may be our last important livestock industry in this state. We do agriculture well in this state—we have the expertise, the know-how, and the work ethic. A very important by-product is manure. Its utilization, by placing valuable nutrients back on the land, represents a sustainable system. And as you know we have more class A land than any other state in this nation. We have an abundant supply of corn and soybeans. We have an existing packing industry that accounts for approximately 32% of all of the slaughter of the pigs in this country. We have the expertise, the technology, and an

already developed infrastructure for an outstanding and low-cost pork production system. Nowhere else in the world can high quality pork be produced as efficiently as right here in the state of Iowa.

But the number of Iowa pork producers is declining at an alarming rate. A number of reasons have been cited:

- Age
- Attitude
- Told they can't compete
 - Choose not to compete
 - Afraid they can't compete
 - Don't know if they can compete
- Lack of equity/capital
- Labor supply

The reason most frequently mentioned is a concern that Iowa producers of modest size cannot be competitive with the larger, more integrated operations commonly located outside Iowa. The purpose of this conference is to discuss ways that producers can be competitive, with particular attention given to lower capital input alternatives.

I hope you find this conference interesting and informative.