

NIAA ID EXPO----Doreen Hannes: 1:30pm 8/26/09

Nancy Rasmussen asked me to fill in for her today as her grandson was injured in active duty with the Army and she had to take him for treatment unexpectedly. As the representative of small producers and agriculturalists as opposed to agribusiness, agri-industry and agri-bureaucracy, I thank you for asking to hear from us today.

To gauge whom I am talking to, I need to ask for a show of hands from the attendees....How many of you are the -primary- providers of care for your own livestock?

Small agriculture producers have a close relationship with manure. We shovel it, spread it, compost it, step in it, fertilize with it, smell it and can tell healthy from unhealthy just by the scent. We prefer knee deep animal manure to ankle-deep bureaucratic manure. You might have heard about us... probably that we are purveyors of misinformation and disinformation, that we should be spoken to at a 6th grade level, that our arguments against the NAIS all 'fit in a few buckets,' and that we simply refuse to see a possible benefit in capitulating to the NAIS. The last part is right. We do not see a benefit to the Identification System. I will explain why and give some solutions for how we may continue to coexist.

1) **There is NO benefit to the small farmer or rancher in the National Animal Identification System.** The truth is that we are people who have contemplated the benefits and detriments of the industrialization of agriculture and have found this model lacking. NAIS is the ultimate in industrialization. The industrial model has caused many of the problems we now face. The push to '**get big or get out**' has failed to produce the results it was supposed to deliver for those who produce or those who consume. It is neither cheap nor efficient. What it **has** caused an enormous growth of middle-men and profiteers who do nothing but shuffle products and paperwork from point A to point B. We see much more benefit for our families, our farms, our communities, our states and our nation in reversing this process and going back to common sense and time tested methods.

2) **As small growers, we have -generally- grabbed on to the word 'sustainable'.** What that means to us is that we are good stewards of the land and the animals we raise. We practice rotational and intensive grazing, intensive gardening, and don't engage in monoculture. Our observations have shown that the old style of diversified farming was the healthiest model for people and land. We do not see 'sustainable' as something to be regulated, certified, audited and verified by huge bureaucracies or an army of paper pushers that do nothing more than complicate the work and exasperate those who are productive in their areas of endeavor. In fact, we see bureaucrats and bureaucracy as the exact opposite of 'sustainable'.

3) **We strive to engage in direct, unregulated, unencumbered trade with the consumers of our products.** No one knows better what they are eating and how it has

been raised than those who buy directly from the grower—who can look the farmer in the eye and ask questions about methods, philosophies and even the family dog. This relationship is important to us. It instills confidence, value and connectedness to both parties. This relationship cannot be replaced by a label that can be scanned by a cell phone to show a picture of someone thousands of miles away who may not even exist.

4) If we are not people who want to deal directly with consumers, we still eat what we grow at our own tables and plan to continue to market our products. We are **not** interested in 'market access', defined in the National Ag Law glossary as "access to international markets". In searching the data available on import/export, one finds that the United States has not raised enough cattle for slaughter to meet our needs for decades. Chasing after an export market that is not beneficial for either consumers or ranchers is foolishness.

5) NAIS is unworkable, intrusive, and undesirable. For us, who have no interest in international trade, it is an affront to both our common sense and our sensibilities. According to the GAO, the system that industrial ag has developed- consolidated farming, consolidated processing and long distance transportation- is a weakness that can be exploited by terrorists. From a data standpoint, relating to the numbering of properties as premises under the NAIS, we know that the more consolidated information is, the less secure it is. How many times have government employees lost their laptops? There is no such thing as a 'secure' database. There is no un-hackable system, particularly one that must be accessed repeatedly, as is the design of NAIS.

6) Although the USDA has stated that they are addressing concerns of cost, confidentiality, liability, and flexibility, they have never addressed the Constitutionality of a program with this scope and surveillance of private property.

Like it or not, there are very real, very deeply held religious objections to this program. Many in agriculture are strongly convicted Christians who cannot reconcile themselves with continuing in their endeavors under the spectre of the NAIS or any similar program. Put simply, we'll quit rather than go against our beliefs. The 1st Amendment guarantees the right to freedom of religion implicitly. The 4th Amendment is violated under NAIS, as records regarding one's private property and the disposition of that property are open in order to effectuate this 48 hour traceback, and 'sightings' are listed as a reportable event. The 5th Amendment is also put into question as one may be construed as testifying against oneself in a liability issue simply by following the design of this program.

7) Many people have already sold off their herds and ceased participating in animal agriculture because they didn't believe that they would be able to avoid the NAIS and all of the underhanded ways used to bring about premises registration. Some of the worst methods have been:

- 1) as a condition of aid in NC drought relief,
- 2) State fairs requiring PIN's to exhibit in shows, (CO, CA)

- 3) unwilling registrations of Premises ID to participate in government funded programs not designated as NAIS,
- 4) students paid to sign up people for NAIS in Oklahoma,(FFA)
- 5) **--children--** encouraged to register their parent's property in NAIS using computers at school (several reports)
- 6) data mined by State Depts of Ag who've enrolled people's property simply for being listed as a farm, resulting in 226% of potential 'premises' being registered in the state of Massachusetts. (NY, PA, MA, ID)

People are disenchanted with both the government and the organizations trying to bring about NAIS and have even sold their property after being assigned a NAIS premises number without their informed consent. Right now, in Wisconsin, several court cases are pending for failure to register a property. An Amish man, Emmanuel J. Miller, looks to be the first to be fined for refusing to participate in this program....All the while, the USDA proudly proclaims on their website, "NAIS is 'voluntary' at the federal level". The types of behavior engaged in by the states and various ag organizations desiring to get their hands on more federal money (our money!) is repugnant to the citizens of the United States, and to all those who believe in the rights the Constitution guarantees the citizenry.

8) Anyone who actually listened at the listening sessions heard that 337 were adamantly against any NAIS whatsoever, 20 were for voluntary, and 33 were for mandatory. The \$281 already spent per each premises registered, even with all the nefarious methods employed, demonstrates clearly that real people **do not** want this program.

The religious and civil liberties objections are not something to be dismissed simply because one stands to gain a corporate profit through the implementation of NAIS.

9) As pointed out before, many have already sold their herds or are cutting back extensively hoping to liquidate entirely before NAIS becomes mandatory. This is significant for both industry and consumers. In cattle alone, 30% of our beef comes from small farms with less than 50 head of mamma cows in the herd. When that production is lost, the tax revenues of counties and states, the rural businesses, rural real estate prices, and local culture kept alive by small production agriculture will be lost.

For those of us engaged in direct marketing of natural meat, this diminished supply network will limit our ability to expand when demand grows beyond what we can produce on our own farms.

Again, it goes against our sensibilities to raise animals under the industrialized agriculture model and is not beneficial for our land, our animals, our customers, or ourselves.

Now to the coexisting...I know you've all been waiting for that....Recognizing, that in this country, with our Constitution, and our social mores, NAIS or a similar program by a

different name will result in civil unrest --**at best**--; it would behoove the USDA and the NIAA, to simply tighten the scope and application of this program to **ONLY** those who wish to export to countries that require NAIS style management for importation. Export Verification Services should provide those who wish to export with the criteria necessary. Those who desire to export can pay for it as well. Government should not aid corporations to create captive supply for export of all domestic livestock production. Domestic growers get the best prices when export is only out of genuine excess of production beyond domestic need.

In conclusion, there are really only two kinds of people; those who want to be left alone and those who won't leave them alone. Small producers who do ***not*** wish to participate in export, and their customers, definitely want to be left alone.