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Review of *Pigs, Profits, and Rural Communities* Edited by Kendall M. Thu and E. Paul Durrenberger

Mark S. Honeyman
Iowa State University

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Pigs, Profits, and Rural Communities. Edited by Kendall M. Thu and E. Paul Durrenberger. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. vii+208 pp. Figures, tables, notes, references, index. \$54.50 cloth (ISBN 0791438872), \$17.95 paper (ISBN 0791438880).

These are historic times of rapid change in US agriculture, particularly the swine production industry. Rapid change creates controversy. Controversy surrounding the industrialization of the US swine industry is often over-simplified as a two-sided debate. In *Pigs, Profits, and Rural Communities*, editors Kendall Thu and Paul Durrenberger—anthropologists—effectively gather and present the multi-dimensional depth and breadth of the profoundly rapid change in the swine industry with a collection of eleven perspectives plus their own introductory comments.

Moving beyond the rhetoric and emotion of “family farm” or “environmental interests,” the editors present a well-organized collection of credible “voices.” They explain the consequences of industrial pig production on rural communities, many of which find hog raising at the heart of their farm economics and way of life. These voices “help to crystallize problems associated with the industrial paradigm (large-scale pig production) in order to remedy them.”

The book clearly identifies the “external” costs of industrialization, costs borne by communities and taxpayers, and includes discussions of community disruption, farm family economic displacement, environmental damage, political power brokering, swine confinement odor impact on neighbors, and health impacts on hog confinement workers. Also described are the effects of low-wage jobs that require expanded community outlays for health care, law enforcement, welfare, and schools. The book’s various perspectives draw on experiences primarily from North Carolina, where hog industrialization began and is now well established, and Iowa, where industrial systems and more traditional family-based hog production systems are clashing. The two states offer dramatic contrasts and lessons.

Intelligent guest perspective chapters review the effects of industrial changes in other agricultural sectors, such as the use of contracting in the poultry sector and the shift to industrial agriculture in California in the 1940s. Alternative views of the future of the hog sector are also offered. These include sustainable agriculture approaches and the promising potential of grassroots swine producer networks.

What *Pigs, Profits, and Rural Communities* does best is to help the reader better understand industrial food production at many levels and from many perspectives. The editors skillfully broaden the boundaries of the dialogue about the future of the swine industry. Several of their key points are well worth registering here:

1. Externalization of costs by the industrial model is significant and widespread.
2. Industrialization is not the inevitable result of new technology. The authors show that “we do have choices over the type of food production we want in this country.”
3. Industrialization shifts management and profits away from dispersed rural areas and dismantles rural communities. Research in Iowa “indicated that having more hog farms was better for rural (community) health than producing more hogs.”
4. Industrialization is causing “waves of consequential changes” not only in the way the United States produces food, but also in the social fabric of rural areas.

Succinct, well-written, well-timed, truthful books have changed the course of agriculture in the past. This book certainly causes one to pause and reflect on what is happening in rural America, and may move some to action. **Mark S. Honeyman**, *Research and Demonstration Farms, Iowa State University*.