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ARTICLE ABSTRACT

CAFO Controversy in the Texas Panhandle Region: The Environmental Crisis of Hog Production

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In this analysis we use the case of the expansion of mega-hog operations in the Panhandle area of Texas to illustrate the strategies corporate actors employ to counter environmental concerns expressed by activist groups. To facilitate the growth of hog CAFOs (confined animal feeding operations), corporate actors exert their influence over state environmental agencies and eliminate public participation from quality of the environment evaluation procedures. In response, activist groups use the courts to challenge the corporate strategies on the grounds that hog CAFOs compromise the physical and social environment of their communities. Pro-business interests respond through narrowing the definition of environmentally sound agricultural activities by stressing their conformity to existing environmental regulations and highlighting the economic benefits related to job expansion and monetary donations to cooperating communities. We conclude that the concept of the environment is a contested terrain made up of competing socially created discourses that need substantive rather than formal evaluations.

Keywords: environment, development, hogs, corporate, CAFO

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