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**Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation**

**(CAFO)**

By

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Updated February 01, 2019

Although the term is sometimes used loosely to refer to any factory farm, "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation" (CAFO) is a designation by the United States Environmental Protection Agency meaning any operation in which animals are fed in **confined** (*restricted*) spaces, but specifically those which store a large number of animals and produce a large amount of water and **manure** (*animal dung used to fertilise the land*) waste as well as contributing pollutants to the surrounding environment.

The **disambiguation** (*make sth clear*) of the term CAFO from AFO can be a bit confusing, but the main focus of the distinction lies in the size and impact of the operation, with CAFO being worse all around — which is why it is often associated with all [factory farms](https://www.thoughtco.com/why-do-we-have-factory-farming-127703), even if they don't meet EPA standards to qualify as a CAFO.

The Legal Definition

[According to the EPA](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/signpost/index.html), an Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) is an operation in which "animals are kept and raised in confined situations. AFOs **congregate** (*gather into crowd*) animals, feed, manure and urine, dead animals, and production operations on a small land area. Feed is brought to the animals rather than the animals **grazing** (*eat grass in a field*) or otherwise seeking feed in pastures, fields, or on rangeland."

CAFOs are AFOs that fall under one of the [EPA's definitions](https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/sector_table.pdf) of Large, Medium or Small CAFOs, depending on the number of animals involved, how wastewater and manure are managed, and whether the operation is "a significant contributor of pollutants."

Although nationally accepted as a federal mandate, state governments can choose whether or not to enforce punishments and restrictions the EPA sets on these facilities. However, a repeated lack of **compliance** (*obey an order, rule,* *regulation=συμμόρφωση)* with EPA regulations or repeat excessive pollution from factory farms could result in a federal case against the company in question.

The Problem with CAFO

[Animal rights activists](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-are-animal-rights-127600) and environmentalists alike argue against the continued use of factory farms, especially those that qualify under the EPA as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. These farms produce an **inordinate** (*excessive=υπερβολικός*) amount of pollution and animal waste as well as consuming large amounts of crops, manpower, and energy to maintain.

Furthermore, the harsh conditions animals kept in these CAFO are often seen as violating the basic rights U.S. citizens believe animals are entitled to — although the [Animal Welfare Act](https://www.thoughtco.com/overview-of-the-animal-welfare-act-127546) excludes farms from classification and investigation from their agencies.

Another issue with commercial animal farming is that the population of cattle, chickens, and pigs cannot be maintained at the current rate of global consumption. Either the food used to nourish cows to edible health will disappear or the cattle themselves will be overeaten and eventually go the way of the Wooly Mammoth — extinct.

Lin, Doris. "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO)." ThoughtCo, Aug. 27, 2020, thoughtco.com/concentrated-animal-feeding-operation-cafo-127713.

*Activity:*

List the major problems that Factory Farms are associated with. Mention at least 3.

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What kind of animal population is bred in Factory Farms?

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