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Regulation of Agricultural Pollution*. By Elizabeth
Brubaker

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Greener Pastures: Decentralizing the Regulation of Agricultural Pollution. By Elizabeth Brubaker. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. viii + 153 pp. Notes, index. \$45.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Greener Pastures chronicles the proliferation of intensive hog production in Canada. Exploring the history of right-to-farm legislation, Elizabeth Brubaker focuses on the experiences of Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Ontario, although parallel situations may be found throughout the country. Starting with Manitoba's notorious 1976 Nuisance Act, which paved the way for similar industry-shielding legislation in all other provinces, this book follows the devious evolution of laws that protect barn operators from environmental and public health liabilities, erode citizens' rights to seek relief and compensation through the judicial system, and remove decision-making powers from the communities that will be most affected. The treatise is richly illustrated with representative legal cases and their unsatisfactory outcomes, yet the accounts of pollution are comparatively restrained: even more distressing examples could be cited, there being so many from which to draw.

The continually increasing protection of operators under right-to-farm laws has created conflict and division within rural neighborhoods, with objections originating from all societal sectors, including other farmers. Those who profit are not those who have to bear the health and financial costs. Farm Practices Protection Boards, biased in favor of industry, review complaints based not on whether a practice is safe or right, but on whether it is "normal." As the definition of "normal" has expanded, its enshrinement has removed incentives to improve practices that would

reduce nuisances and promote better environmental safeguards. Right-to-farm has become right-to-pollute. We have not learned from the experiences of other jurisdictions where intensive hog production is no longer allowed to expand.

The problem is compounded by the fact that some politicians and legislators are also barn owners or shareholders. The industry is well organized, with powerful public relations departments whose primary goal is to whitewash and deflect attention from elements that may fuel unfavorable public perception. Provincial governments are caught in the dilemma of promoting the industry, while faced with public expectation of regulation and enforcement: the primary allegiance, however, is to the economy. Pigs have a clear and immediate dollar value; health, environment, and the right to a decent way of life are much more ambiguous.

In the final chapter, Brubaker advocates a return to empowerment of local neighborhoods in decision making. These are the communities that have the best knowledge of regional environmental and societal conditions and who should have the right to determine what sorts of developments they will allow in their midst since they have to bear the most direct consequences of any incursions on their lives and property values. This advice, however, seems rather optimistic and unlikely to take hold, since it will remove municipal "consistency" and therefore the ability of a powerful industry to insinuate itself fully in areas where it is not wanted.

Generally well organized, clearly written, and with few minor typographical errors, *Greener Pastures* is an informative and recommended read. **Eva Pip**, *Department of Biology, University of Winnipeg*.