



Agriprocessors Fact Sheet

Company Summary:

Agriprocessors is one of the world's largest kosher meat producers. The company is based in Postville, Iowa, where it employs over 800 people and produces beef, poultry, turkey, and lamb. The company has a smaller plant in Gordon, Nebraska, which employs roughly 100. Agriprocessors produces meat products under brands such as Aaron's Best, Aaron's Choice, and Rubashkin's. The company's products are sold at well-known retailers such as Trader Joe's and Albertsons.

The plant has been the center of controversy for a variety of issues, including health and safety at the plant, environmental issues, food safety, and animal welfare.

Health and Safety Issues:

In the period of April 2001 to February 2006, OSHA records show no less than 20 violations at Agriprocessors, a meatpacking plant in Postville, Iowa. Of these, 12 were identified by OSHA as serious.ⁱ An examination of OSHA injury logs at the plant reveals over five amputations along with dozens of other serious injuries such as broken bones, eye injuries, and hearing loss.

On March 20, 2008, the Iowa Occupational Health and Safety Agency (IOSHA) charged Agriprocessors with 39 new health and safety violations with fines totaling \$180,000.ⁱⁱ For perspective, in 2007, IOSHA issued 19 violations for all meatpacking plants in Iowa with fines totaling over \$120,000.ⁱⁱⁱ The new citations at Agriprocessors range from amputation risks, fire hazards, electric shock risks, and improperly labeled hazardous chemicals.

Numerous reports in the media and an investigation by an independent commission of Rabbis have revealed numerous cases of worker mistreatment including lack of training, job favoritism, and unsafe conditions.^{iv}

In January 2008, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that Agriprocessors must obey a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruling to bargain. Agriprocessors refused to bargain in September 2005, after a large majority of its distribution center workers voted to join the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW). Agriprocessors argued that, despite having hired them, many of these employees were undocumented and therefore they could not vote or belong to a union. The NLRB ruled against Agriprocessors, maintaining that every employee, regardless of immigration status, has a collective bargaining vote.^v

Environment:

On August 30, 2006, Agriprocessors, Inc., signed a consent agreement with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), following a lawsuit arising out of alleged violations of the Clean Water Act. The agreement included specific monitoring and reporting provisions by which the company is required to abide.^{vi} According to a document obtained by the UFCW through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, Agriprocessors was in violation of some or all of those requirements as of March 29, 2007. A telephone conversation with the EPA on August 28, 2007 indicated that Agriprocessors notified the EPA that the company had recently completed the required audit. It is unclear if the EPA considers Agriprocessors tardy in completing the audit and what penalties, if any, will be levied. Any findings and recommendations from the audit are also unknown at this time.

In a separate letter from the EPA to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) concerning Agriprocessors' NPDES permit renewal, the EPA raised concerns about compliance with the Clean Water Act at the Postville plant (see attachment).

Food Safety:

Various food safety problems have been documented at both Agriprocessors' facilities, the main plant in Postville, IA^{vii} and a smaller plant in Gordon, NE.^{viii} These reports were based on documents from the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and revealed a variety of issues, including multiple violations related to monitoring procedures for BSE, or "mad cow." The FSIS also issued citations for sewage problems, fecal and bile contamination of beef and poultry along with foreign objects, and some metallic found during sausage and poultry production. Issues at the Postville plant led one FSIS official to issue a Letter of Warning and to comment in the letter, "These findings lead us to question your ability to maintain sanitary conditions, and to produce a safe and wholesome product."^{ix}

ⁱ Occupational Health and Safety Agency, http://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/establishment.search?p_logger=1&establishment=Agriprocessors&State=All&officetype=All&Office=All&p_case=closed&endmonth=03&endday=25&endyear=2000&startmonth=03&startday=25&startyear=2006.

ⁱⁱ Des Moines Register, "Agriprocessors cited for alleged health, safety problems," <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080321/BUSINESS01/803210369/1029/BUSINESS>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Occupational Health and Safety Agency, <http://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/industry.html>.

^{iv} United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry," http://www.uscj.org/Report_of_the_Commis7199.html

^v Jewish Daily Forward, "Kosher Meat Company Loses Legal Fight to Union," <http://www.forward.com/articles/12439/>

^{vi} Environmental Protection Agency, "AgriProcessors to Pay \$600,000 in Environmental Case," http://epa.gov/region07/businesses/consent_decrees/agr_press_release083106.htm.

^{vii} Jewish Daily Forward, "Food Safety Records Add to Woes of Nation's Largest Kosher Slaughterhouse," <http://www.forward.com/articles/11363/>.

^{viii} Food Production Daily, "Kosher firm fails on food safety," <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=83660-agriprocessors-srm-hallmark-westland>.

^{ix} Jewish Daily Forward, "Food Safety Records Add to Woes of Nation's Largest Kosher Slaughterhouse," <http://www.forward.com/articles/11363/>.