

# WELFARE & IMPACTS

Improving Animal and Worker Health and Welfare

*Finding Common Ground Forum Series*

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## Summary Report - Finding Common Ground

January 17, 2013

Societal concern about the welfare of livestock has recently driven government and private sector policy regarding animal agriculture practices, with the focus being on changes in systems of production, particularly housing methods. Largely absent from this discussion is consideration of the role of, and the impact on, the people who have primary responsibility for the care of these animals - the agriculture worker. Complex issues that link **Animal Welfare and Worker Health** require a broad perspective, an inquisitive mind, and a commitment to collaboration. On January 17, 2013 seventy nine participants from 5 states representing different disciplines, sectors and interests gathered at the St Paul Humanities Center to explore the policy issues surrounding **Animal Welfare and Worker Health**. The dialogue was hosted by the Center for Integrative Leadership, the Center for Animal Health and Food Safety, the Global Initiative for Food Systems Leadership, and the Upper Midwest Agriculture Safety and Health Center.

Panelists representing animal production, human occupational health, and animal welfare started the conversation by providing three perspectives on the issues. The rest of the day was spent in facilitated small group conversations exploring opportunities for improving both the well-being of food animals and the health and safety of the workers who care for them.

The small group format provided the participants the opportunity to strengthen their appreciation and respect for differing perspectives. A few of the big ideas to emerge from the small group activities include:

- Creating a space for further conversation through the creation of a council of worker safety and animal health practitioners
- Creating a farmer-activist alliance for rebuilding trust on issues of best practices in food animal production and regulation
- Linking worker safety programs to animal welfare quality assurance programs.
- Providing educational support and resources regarding animal and worker health and safety to small farms. Creation of a network for sharing best practices.

A participant survey following the forum revealed that

- 92% of the participants found the program to be valuable and would recommend future Finding Common Ground Forums to others
- The forum personally impacted participants in the following areas
  - The safe environment created to share viewpoints honestly and openly
  - The opportunity to listen to the viewpoints of others with an open mind
  - New connections and fostering new relationships
- The speakers and discussion with the panelists were the most valuable aspects of the program

The Upper Midwest Agriculture Safety and Health Center (UMASH) has issued a Request for Proposals to bring together specialists in worker health and safety, and production animal health and welfare to further explore the connection between **Animal Welfare and Worker Health**. UMASH is offering pilot project funding to bring to life some of the big ideas that emerged from this forum. More information can be found at [http://umash.umn.edu/projects/pilot\\_projects\\_rfp.html](http://umash.umn.edu/projects/pilot_projects_rfp.html).

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