



Written by [Robert Confer](#) on November 7, 2012

Farmers Beware Obama's Second Term

During 2010 and 2011 the Food and Drug Administration conducted a concerted effort to suppress the distribution of unpasteurized milk across state lines. Among the targets of these stings were food clubs and the harmless Amish, including [Pennsylvania's Don Allgyer, who had to shut down his beloved Rainbow Acres Farm](#). The arcane rules against raw milk were enforced — at gunpoint — despite the health benefits of the beverage and the freedom that people should have to willingly ingest the foods they want in the manner they'd like.



In 2011, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (an arm of the Department of Transportation) had a plan to override states' rights and reclassify farm vehicles and implements as commercial vehicles, which [would have required hundreds of thousands of farm workers to get a commercial drivers license \(CDL\)](#). As if that wasn't disturbing enough, the language within those regulations would have reclassified farming as interstate commerce, which would have opened the flood gates to federal oversight of all farming activities. Fortunately, a last minute flurry during the public comment period prevented these regulations from becoming the law of the land.

Then, later that year, [the Department of Labor came out with a draft of new labor laws](#) that would have forever harmed agriculture by preventing 14- to 17-year-olds from doing a wide variety of farming tasks, which included working with and around tractors and powered equipment and all acts of animal husbandry. This would have kept thousands of teens unemployed and prevented their exposure to the lifestyle of farming in their formative years. Once again, this was stopped by intense public feedback.

Those issues represent some of the more significant assaults Washington levied against farming under President Obama's watch. Many more policies were broached, many more initiated. If what the Obama Administration did or wanted to do to agriculture over the past four years is any indication of what the next four will bring, farmers should take notice. Since the President doesn't have to worry about reelection and the heads of the various offices know that they likely have just four years of job security left (and all of them want to leave a legacy), farmers may be subject to some significant abuses by the administration.

Farmers — and those who enjoy their produce — are probably asking themselves this: Why does the Obama administration so hate farming? The answer is two-fold: It likely comes down to freedom and corporatism.

This president is no fan of freedom in its truest sense, since it requires a semblance of personal responsibility and personal liberty, and the trials, tribulations, and outcomes that come with it. In his version of freedom people flourish under a watchful government that protects the people not from one another, but from themselves. He prefers they be saddled with laws, regulations and standards so they remain safe, comfortable and uniform.

Among the greatest personal liberties is food freedom; that people may enter into an economic compact



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with any supplier they'd like in order to acquire the foods they want. We've seen an explosion in those circles in recent years (a result of the liberty, organic food, and locavore movements). Now there are 7,684 farmers' markets nationwide (up from 2,863 just 12 years ago). In New York alone, one out of every five farms engages in direct-to-consumer sale. That activity is a direct threat to the bureaucratic system put in play at the federal level, as roadside stands and food not moving across state borders eliminate not only the middle man, but the watchful eye and guiding hand of Big Brother, too. By sticking their noses into food production and sale at the local level, it's likely that Obama's team feels they can gain control of our transactions, our diets, and our bodies.

As for corporatism, consider that the raw milk raids, CDL standards, and child labor laws would have most harmed small, family-owned-and-operated farms. They don't possess the financial strength and other resources to comply. Larger corporate farms, on the other hand, do. They would thrive in such an environment as they would buy up the smaller farms that died only as a result of government intervention.

Crony capitalism is what makes the world go 'round in Washington. It prevents a true free market by strangling the ability of the little guys to compete and allow continued success only through economies of scale. This favor played is one of the primary reasons that 50% of all food production comes from the largest 2% of US farms. Even Obama, who claims to be above the fray, is guilty of aiding and abetting rabid corporatism —[80% of his 2008 campaign funds came from large donors](#) (a final analysis of the 2012 campaign will likely show the same).

It's patently obvious that the Obama administration has an inherent disdain for farming, the heart and soul of this country and one of the last true wealth-creators of our economy. This should worry farmers because we have four more years of a leader who once boasted to Russia's head of state that, ["after my election, I have more flexibility."](#) More telling and chilling words were never said.



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