HEADLINE: **Enviropigs will not help environment**

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BODY: In the near future, a side of bacon might be more than just pig. It will probably contain some mouse and a little bit of an E. coli bacterium too. The reason: Canadian scientists genetically designed a pig by injecting genes from an E. coli bacterium and a mouse into a singlecell pig embryo. And this new combination is in demand. These transgenic pigs excrete manure containing 50 to 75 percent less phosphorous -- a chemical the EPA says is a major threat to our nation's water and drinking supply. The pigs, trademarked Enviropigs, will be the first genetically modified farm animals to reach the market anywhere in the world, their creators at Ontario's University of Guelph believe. Microbiologist Cecil Forsberg, involved in the project, said the Enviropig is "for sure, the first modified farm animal engineered to solve an environmental problem."

Lilian Schaer, a spokeswoman for Ontario Pork -- a marketing group that represents 4,500 pig producers and has financially supported the genetic research, agrees. "A pig that produces less phosphorous would be a dream pig from just about everyone's point of view," she said.

These pigs, however, have nothing to do with cleaning up the environment and everything to do with increasing profits.

In 1950 the average hog sales per farm were about 31. Now 105 farms raising more than 50,000 pigs each account for 40 percent of the U.S. hog industry, according to the Minneapolis based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. And the only thing keeping these farms from getting larger is their inability to dispose of large quantities of manure in a manner adhering to the Clean Water Act. But now that the phosphorous levels can be lowered, don't expect these large farms to sit back and applaud themselves for being more environmentally conscious. Instead they will increase their farms' sizes until the hazardous effects of the manure again straddle the regulatory limits set forth by the Clean Water Act.

Although this might lower the price of pork, it does nothing to address the current environmental issues and in fact only compounds many of them. Currently, the hog industry poses a grave threat to humans. Their antibiotic-laced feed creates bacteria resistant to human antibiotics. The large hog farms emit greenhouse gasses and nitrogen gas, which can radically change the surrounding ecosystem. The increased number of Enviropigs will exacerbate these problems.

Swine will eat anything they are given. Unfortunately, the byproduct of this behavior threatens both the environment and humans. Even though scientists claim they can minimize the harm of these insatiable appetites, don't be fooled. The intent here is not to protect the environment, but rather exploit regulations and increase profits.

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