

Rural Crime Prevention

Agroterrorism

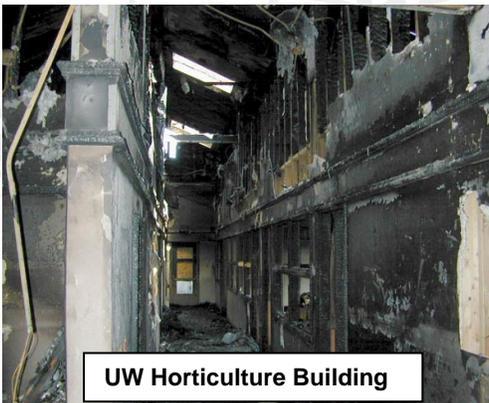
Background

Agroterrorism is not a new threat or even a new threat to this country. Long before World War I, agroterrorism has been used as a weapon against many countries to include our own. In World War I, Glanders and anthrax were used to infect draft animals not only in Europe but also in North America. In 1984, salmonella was used in Oregon to contaminate salad bars – 751 people were sickened. In 1989, grapes from Chile were poisoned with a small amount of cyanide. This posed no great threat to human health, but devastated the Chilean grape industry. Agriculture represents one-sixth of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. An agroterrorism event could disrupt the food supply of the United States and that of other countries that depend on the United States for food. ***Agroterrorism can and does happen here.***



What is Agroterrorism?

Agroterrorism is the deliberate contamination of livestock, poultry, or crops with the intention of doing harm to the social, economic, and psychological well being of a population and its economy. The deliberate use of chemical, biological, or radiological agents is not far-fetched ideas, but a reality. A single incident of agroterrorism can halt exports to other countries. A prolonged outbreak could devastate an entire market which could take several years to reestablish.



The Threat

The attacks on September 11th, 2001 very loudly told Americans that international terrorism has arrived in the United States. From information found in the resulting military campaign in Afghanistan, agroterrorism was indeed on their list of methods to be employed against the United States.

The threat from outside the country is not the only threat. There are many groups inside the U.S. that have and will continue to cause havoc. Agriculture is not immune from these internal attacks; in fact, agriculture has been one of the leading targets for these groups. The arson attack on the

University of Washington's Horticulture Center is but one example.

Currently there is no actionable intelligence that points to any immediate threat or attack against the agricultural industry; however it is advised that citizens remain vigilant to suspicious activities or persons in or near agricultural and food production infrastructure.



Photo from Valley Processing, Inc

What is the Risk?

Agriculture in this country is a major economic driver. Granted, the U.S. manufactures and develops technology and exports it all over the world, but agriculture and food products are still a mainstay of the U.S. export economy. With the advances in agriculture systems and consolidation of agricultural and food processing operations, the U.S. has become the world leader in agriculture and food production. These advances along with the speed of our just-in-time process of supplying our markets make the possibility of agroterrorism a reality.

The openness of the U.S. agriculture and food production community also makes agriculture a lucrative target for agroterrorism. The agriculture and food community in this country has long had a trusting and open culture.

The public and the world have great confidence in the safety of U.S. agriculture and food products. However, on occasion that has been shaken through naturally occurring events, such as: mad cow, E.coli in spinach, and the ongoing concern about avian influenza. Each of these can have a tremendous impact on the economy of those industries. Agroterrorism, along with the direct injuries it will cause, will capitalize on the fears of consumers and devastate our markets throughout the world.

What can we do to prevent Agroterrorism?

- We need to first look at farm and plant security. The steps given you in the other brochures on this web-site (<http://agr.wa.gov/FoodSecurity/docs/RuralCrimePrevention.pdf>) will assist you in making your operation more secure.
- Things like Neighborhood Watch and other community crime prevention activities can assist you in protecting your livelihood. We want to make Washington Agriculture “**too hard to do**” for the agroterrorist.
- Awareness of the problem by the farm and food processing owners and employees can make their operation much more secure.
- Quick reporting of suspicious activities to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies can greatly assist them in helping to protect our vital agriculture and food production industries.

If you are reporting a crime in progress, dial 911. Stay on the line and follow the instructions from the 911 operator.

**For More Information:
Contact your local Sheriffs Department
or,
Washington State Department of Agriculture
(360) 902 - 1800**



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