



The Meat Racket: The Secret Takeover of America's Food Business

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An investigative journalist takes you inside the corporate meat industry—a shocking, in-depth report every American should read.

The biggest takeover in American business that you've never heard of

The American supermarket seems to represent the best in America: abundance, freedom, choice. But that turns out to be an illusion. The rotisserie chicken, the pepperoni, the cordon bleu, the frozen pot pie, and the bacon virtually all come from four companies.

In *The Meat Racket*, investigative reporter Christopher Leonard delivers the first-ever account of how a handful of companies have seized the nation's meat supply. He shows how they built a system that puts farmers on the edge of bankruptcy, charges high prices to consumers, and returns the industry to the shape it had in the 1900s before the meat monopolists were broken up. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the greatest capitalist country in the world has an oligarchy controlling much of the food we eat and a high-tech sharecropping system to make that possible.

Forty years ago, more than thirty-six companies produced half of all the chicken Americans ate. Now there are only three that make that amount, and they control every aspect of the process, from the egg to the chicken to the chicken nugget. These companies are even able to raise meat prices for consumers while pushing down the price they pay to farmers. And tragically, big business and politics have derailed efforts to change the system.

We know that it takes big companies to bring meat to the American table. What *The Meat Racket* shows is that this industrial system is rigged against all of us. In that sense, Leonard has exposed our heartland's biggest scandal.

The Meat Racket: The Secret Takeover of America's Food Business Details

Date : Published February 18th 2014 by Simon Schuster

ISBN : 9781451645811

Author : Christopher Leonard

Format : Hardcover 384 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Food and Drink, Food, Politics, Science, Agriculture, Business, History

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Christopher Leonard**

From Reader Review The Meat Racket: The Secret Takeover of America's Food Business for online ebook

Andrew says

We all like meat but don't want to think about where it comes from. And I'm kind of fine with that. Presumably regulation - well enforced - protects animals from undue cruelty. So we remain complicitly sheltered. For the alternative, expensive and rare meat, study dietary habits of the Middle Ages. I have.

But *The Meat Racket* blows apart our happy myths in its chronicling of the human cost of cheap, plentiful meat. It records the dominance integrated corporations hold over farmers and national food supplies, with the concomitant powerlessness of rural entrepreneurs to even consider negotiation. And up to a point I'm fine with the free market economics of all this. But both sides need retain some power for these relationships to be true exercises of competitive capitalism. And this isn't the case. In fact, we've almost returned to the feudal age. Only now with lots of meat.

Christopher Leonard has written an essential book that asks where our unlabelled grocery meat comes from - an eye opener that's an argument for right-wing vegetarianism. It could be written with a bit more poetry, but I don't think it needs that. His revelations are story enough.

Follow me on Twitter: @Dr_A_Taubman

Alyce says

Extremely torn - I think that this an important subject; I like the author's writing style; I admire the compassion that he has for all of the parties involved (whether farmer or meat conglomerate exec); and I respect the amount of research undertaken to write this book- but I wish there were more meat here. This would have made a compelling magazine expose- but because there's not enough here to support an entire book, it's quite redundant.

And the title is misleading. If you are going to call a book "The Meat Racket", you can't limit that racket to chicken, or devote most of the book to Tyson (there is a brief mention of Perdue's market share but not much more). This book would be better named "The Tyson Chicken Racket". Because you cannot write a book about the chicken industry without researching and covering other brands, like Bell & Evans and Murray's. The chapters on the beef and pork industries seem like merely an afterthought.

On the other hand, if everyone read this book (at least the first third), Tyson, Smithfield, and others would lose a lot of their power over farmers. And perhaps more people would go back to eating organic, free range, delicious meat and poultry. One take-away is that the price we pay as a society for cheap, tasteless, meat is too high.

The author was on to something, and if he had spent a few more years looking for answers to half the questions swirling in my brain as I was reading, this would have been one extraordinary book. Because it does give one pause. I've already stopped buying canned soup because I don't know where the chicken came from....

John says

It's sad for the chicken farmer in Arkansas, indentured to a life of low wages and a real fear of the company that pays him, Tyson Foods, which makes a profit regardless of how the farmer is doing. But this book is not only about chicken, it's about pork and beef and reading it will tend to make you want to be a vegetarian. Tyson Foods has "chickenized" the production of meat in this country, where meat farmers are serfs to the company. But we consumers are able to get our "cheap" chicken in all kinds of forms from this monster company that makes gazillionaires out of the owners and investors off of the backs of its low wage workers and farmers through "vertical integration". Read the book to find out what vertical integration is, which Tyson more or less invented.

Miles Winston says

what was most valuable for me was this book's focus on rural America. when we hear of the big meat companies in the news, it seems they are mostly being attacked from a public health perspective, e.g. their mismanagement of animal waste, overuse of antibiotics, etc. but it's equally important to get a sense of what industry consolidation has done to the rural economy and its negative outcomes for low-income rural populations. the contract farming system, the tournament method for farmer pay, and the generally authoritarian position the companies take against farmers are all important things to be aware of, and this book covers them well.

also interesting was the story of corporate consolidation, as illustrated by Tyson, and the industry's subsequent ability to exercise cartel-esque influence over markets, court proceedings, and policy discussions to an alarming degree. i especially enjoyed the last few chapters on the work of Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller to regulate contract farming in the hog industry in the '90s, and the attempts of Ag. Secretary Tom Vilsack, on behalf of the Obama administration, to bring tougher antitrust enforcement to the meat industry, and remarkably failing. in fact, it seems a rather representative picture of the Obama administration's nominally effective use of executive authority

Samuel says

Many books have tackled the issue of eating meat, especially in terms of humane issues. But none have gone as deep in looking at the impact of the current meat industry on the farmers who produce it. The picture is not pretty. Leonard does a terrific job of pulling back the screen and showing how the system works. It's a gripping story, well told.

Katie says

Non-fiction book all about how Tyson's Food (chicken conglomerate) took over the chicken business in

America. Tyson's was one of the main players (perhaps THE main player) that made factory farming A Thing.

Make no mistake--this is a non-fiction book about chicken factory farming, but I found it completely fascinating. Unlike other writings on this topic, it did not focus on the ethics and/or cruelty of the practice; it focused on the finance and economics aspects.

Before factory farming existed in the U.S. (mid-20th century), there were no laws and regulations really set up to control it. The government had yet to "catch up" to the reality of the new booming business model, and Tyson's took full advantage of it.

It used 2 systems of accounting--a cost-basis one for the I.R.S., which allowed it to defer reporting on profits until the following quarter (making Tyson's appear much less profitable than it actually was), and an accrual-basis one for when it was trying to get bank loans, which allowed it to report even signed contracts (yet to be fulfilled) as earnings, making Tyson's appear as profitable as it could (for the purpose of getting bank loans). Tyson's milked this for years before the government wised up, allowing its business model to grow like a cancer.

Just goes to show you... really smart private-sector lawyers and entrepreneurs will usually outpace and outwit the slow churning cogs of government.

Andrea says

Fast Food Nation made many people aware of the dangers of our current food system to consumers. The Meat Racket uncovers and explains the development of monopoly in the American meat industry that has largely destroyed the independent family farm level control of meat production. Through careful and thorough research, Leonard is able to explain how a few large companies, led by Tyson in the poultry industry and followed by Smithland and a few others in the pork and beef industries, have entrapped farmers into contract farming that makes them basically powerless employees in vertically integrated production. The meat we buy at the grocery store may have labels that imply different companies produce and market it, but, in fact, most of the meat we eat is produced by a few companies through a system that bankrupts farmers and limits our choices as consumers. Leonard uses lots of examples but he is also careful to demonstrate that his examples are representative of what is happening across the nation. I thought I was well informed on this topic, but Leonard's book clarifies food production trends that are troubling for consumers and farmers alike.

Biblio Files (takingadayoff) says

When did chicken become tasteless? I can remember some years ago when it actually had a flavor. Same with beef. According to journalist Christopher Leonard, this is the result of a decades long "chickenization" of the meat industry.

Most of The Meat Racket follows the history of Tyson Foods and its transformation of the chicken industry in America. It isn't a simple story of either big bad corporation or of the genius of unfettered capitalism. You can draw your own conclusions about the benefits versus the drawbacks, but you have to know the story first, and this is as good a place as any to start. Leonard's research is impressive and he's covered a lot of ground to get the facts.

In the same week I read this book, I also happened to read George Packer's article in *The New Yorker* about Amazon.com and was struck by the similar way that Tyson and Amazon scoop up competitors and make no bones about trying to eliminate competition. Tyson early on began buying out their competition, even when they weren't particularly interested in owning the companies, because they wanted to prevent others from buying them and possibly getting an advantage on Tyson. As a customer, you appreciate the low prices they provide and the predictable quality. But after the competition has been neutralized, the giant that's left can dictate conditions and prices to suppliers and to customers as well. The supplier and customer have little choice since there are no longer other options.

Leonard also describes the lack of action on the part of the government, at state and federal levels. Several attempts to apply anti-trust laws have been unsuccessful for a variety of reasons.

Some people may admire the business genius of John and Don Tyson, while others will wonder if chickenization is the future of food, retail, and even books.

Gilda Felt says

If you've ever thought about becoming a vegetarian, this book will give you the push you need. I've long known about the cruel and inhumane treatment given many of the animals that are our food. What I didn't realize was why that was, and how it came to be. Most of it can be laid at the feet of one family: the Tysons.

It begins with John Tyson, a man so scarred by the Depression that he decided he needed all the money in the world. One step at a time, he took over the chicken industry, at the same time infecting his son, Don, with the same psychotic need for money and power. Don's contribution would be to carry on their production practices to the pork industry. Eventually, even the beef industry would be infected.

But I don't agree with the author's claim that the driving force behind the system was the American consumer. Yes, once in place, the American consumer became just as captured as the farmers who signed the misleading contracts; they had little choice. Both would pay a huge price, inexorably caught in Tyson's web. Except for those few who are able to buy their meat from local farms (and I thankfully count myself in their number,) everyone buys either Tyson meat, or that of one of the only three other meat producers. All use a system where the farmers' income is slowly being eroded, while the buyers' price continues to rise. Where the money ends up isn't hard to figure.

Because of the destruction of many farming communities, the brutal and horrifying treatment of the animals, and because of the continued gouging of the American public (and now the world's,) I can only hope that both John and Don burn in hell.

Greg Brozeit says

“Consumers pay more, farmers make less, and corporations in the middle grab a windfall.”

“...the bank extended the mortgages and car loans to the lower-income workers at Tyson's plant. It provided farm loans to the company's chicken farmers. The plant workers never really jumped an income bracket. The farmers never really left their cycle of indebtedness. People might complain, but there really wasn't an alternative.”

That pretty much sums up the story of *The Meat Racket*, a remarkably well-written, skillfully woven story by Christopher Leonard about how Tyson Foods has forever changed the landscape of meat production and processing, farming and, more importantly, rural America. Although it focuses primarily on Tyson, the practices it pioneered have been replicated by its three other major “competitors”—which Leonard shows is a veiled form of collusion. Having recently read Thomas Piketty’s *Capital in the 21st Century*, I find that Leonard’s reporting provides a case study of how one small segment of the one percent have manipulated the economic and social game to the detriment of so many and so much.

This is a dispiriting account that once again highlights the timidity of the Obama administration to address fundamental societal questions when confronted by highly sophisticated, well-funded corporate interests. This is a story of interest to more people than just Americans. These practices are expanding to Brazil, China, India and other nations to feed much of the developed and developing world with a lot of obesity-causing food.

Nicole Rhaven says

Christopher Leonard certainly did his homework. This book is also extremely well written. It is obvious that Leonard is intelligent.

I learned a lot while reading this book and went over a lot that I already know.

I know that Tyson owned chickens, but I guess I never really thought about pigs and cows in that area. I mean I did, but I didn't think there were Tyson owned, but I really wasn't surprised at all.

Tyson is this huge soulless company, who just destroy everything that it touches; people, companies, farms, animals, ect. Most of this book made my stomach hurt based on cold hard facts about what happened to America's food system.

We are not eating food anymore we are eating food-like products, and that is so sickening.

Robin Tierney says

5 stars for fine business journalism.

Every person who lives in America and buys foods and pays taxes should read this excellent piece of investigative business journalism.

It introduces you to members (and former members) of the disappearing breed known as independent farmers (that became producers) and the tycoons that took over hatchery and meatpacking operations and transformed the competitive open-market system for selling farmed animals into an anti-competitive, super-high production contract system in which a handful of vertically integrated mega-corporations set the price and control every aspect of so-called production.

The author shines a light on the shrewd and disturbing practices and maneuvers of business entrepreneurs like the Tyson dynasty (chief architect of the industrial animal production business model) that built those mega-corporations using tax loopholes, farm bill opportunities and independent farmers (producers), frequently bankrupting the latter in the process. Discover how quickly farms became factories. And how big agribusiness effectively played the political game to stop efforts to reform the system and help small farmers.

Long-term perspectives also elucidate the issues. For example: “In the 1930s chicken had been a luxury dish.

When [then-President] Herbert Hoover talked about putting a chicken in every pot, he meant that every American family would achieve a certain measure of affluence. But Don Tyson had seen firsthand how the new model of chicken farming had changed that. The big chicken houses, the mechanized slaughterhouses, the advanced breeding, had all come together to make chicken the cheapest meat available. McDonald's, Wendy's, and Burger King couldn't afford to keep it out of their product lines. Don Tyson would make sure of it."

Advanced breeding techniques to "create the ideal industrial animal": In 1925, it took 15 weeks to raise a chicken that weighed 2.2 pounds. By 1990, it took only about 4 weeks.

Notes taken while reading:

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by Christopher Leonard

Tyson complex Waldron Ark.

Provides the tax base for towns it overran.

Vertical integration: economic principle buy up firms that supply them. Pharma, trucking. Tyson controls and owns everything that happens inside the corporation. No free market determines price at which baby chicks sold to farmer or at what price grown chickens are sold back to a slaughterhouse.

Poultry to hogs, within 2 decades America's independent hog industry was wiped out and replaced with a vertically integrated, corporate-controlled model.

Less money for farmers.

Now cattle industry buckling under pressure.

1960s to 90s industrial meat machine benefit to Am consumers, Tyson's system rewrote the biological equations that once constrained the meat industry. Between 1955 and 1982, the amount of time it took to raise a full-grown chicken fell from 73 days to 52 days. And the chickens got bigger, expanding from an av 3.1 pounds to 4 lbs. ANd took less and less chicken feed each year to accomplish this feat Trend also for pigs and to a lesser degree, cattle.

Cheaper meat.

Growth hormone Zilmax cattle put weight on much faster. Quietly became the industry standard.

Could flood the market to make proces collapse, drive smaller out of business.

Oligarchy.

Antibiotics chicken feed, spray chems at slaughterhouses to kill microbes and prevent foodborne illness.

Farms became factories.

Least profitable part left to contract chicken farmers.

With every flock, the farmer racing against his debt.

Dead birds, biohazard suits.

Claim not know which batch of chicks healthy or not, but had the metrics to know that older hens higher risks.

Bankruptcy.

Pressure drove them down and out. Laotians bought the farms.

John Tyson Great Depression farmer. Don processing designed, new age.

Don Tyson, took out loan, hatchery. His young company benefited from being a new kind of animal. It was both a farm and a manufacturer. It was a biological system and an industrial machine. This hybrid quality allowed it to dodge taxes and evade regulations that constrained the power of other meat companies, like beef meatpackers.

Outsourced the time-intensive, lowest-profit and highest risks components of the process. The people building the chicken houses and raising the chickens suffered.

They try running their own farms, but hired hands didn't work as hard as farmers who had to make a profit on their heavy investments.

New breed of indentured farmer was born.

Science breakthrough - turn petrochemicals into nitrogen fertilizer.

New pesticides

Monocrop age.

1940 farmers bought only 34% of their inputs.. 1960s 63%. Aggregate farm output rose 54%.

Get big and specialized made them more dependent on corps like Tyson.

Prices down, but so did profit margins. So they raised more crops or livestock to stay afloat, increasing supply and driving down prices even more.

Tyson CPA was told to convince IRS to classify them as a family farm. Because of loophole: family farms allowed to use cash-basis accounting, simpler recordkeeping, figuring if not have accountants. So, even though multi-million dollar corporation, could claim family farm and get simplified recordkeeping, defer income claims and can claim losses each year, and pay just minimal taxes. He set up a dummy corp that was a wholly owned subsidiary of Tyson's. Like an interest-free loan from the taxpayers.

And keep 2 sets of books.

Bought up competitors. 13 years push into fast food, cheapest meat easy pre-processes. McNuggets 1983.

Tournaments

Don Tyson stoked competition among chicken producers and his staff. Magnetic personality they felt compelled to impress.

Even when resigned as CEO, became chairman, created Class B shares, maintained control and veto power.

In late 1990s, expansions into seafood and hogs faltering. Taxpayer gift worth billions of dollars to help it reconstruction -- this would underpin the profits of every major corporate meat producer for more than a decade.

Subsidies - central planning by US govt. Limited overproduction.

New farm program Freedom to Farm 1996. Now free to overproduce. Prices plummeted, farmers lost money, taxpayers covered losses. Made corn cheaper to buy than grow, so benefited Tyson.

Freedom to Farm delivered about \$947 million a year in savings to industrial hog producers alone.

Smithfield had copied Tyson playbook and took the lead.

Iowa: Iowa Beef Producers: IBP beef factory early 1980s in Garden City KS, could kill over 5,000 cows a day, one every 11 seconds or so over 2 eight-hour shifts. Super-sized slaughterhouse enabled them to produce and ship millions of pounds of boxed beef (innovation, easier and cheaper to ship to Seattle and Florida, retailers and restaurants, so immense market advantage). Needed a dependable supply of animals. Proved hardly to vertically integrate cow production compared with Tyson's vertical integration of chicken

and hog farming. Efforts hampering by 2 of the cow's internal organs: the rumen and the uterus. By nature 4-chambered stomach to digest the cellulose in grass. Not supposed to eat corn...and uterus: one baby at a time, one year at a time. So tinker with biology to boost profits.

And contracts with formula prices with ranchers and feedlot (instead of them taking finished animals to auction).

Iowa is the lead producers of cheap corn and soybeans, so it benefited them to alter farmed animals' diets.

Chickenization of other agribusiness:

Like chickens, after Tyson changed the markets, hogs sold by contract instead of open market, pushing independent sellers/dealers out. No longer an open, competitive cash market.

By 2011 98% of all hogs were grown and sold under contract through vertically integrated companies like Smithfield.

Ended a system begun with hwy system that enabled national transport.

Now, not competitive, a few corps determine price and supply.

Cowboys now ride around massive feedlots.

Tyson, Cargill, JBS Swift and National Beef control the beef market. Producers pitted against meatpackers. Contract system for feedlot operators created de facto vertically integration, guaranteeing supply to 4 corps without risk borne by suppliers.

Spirit-killing culture took over by 1990s. One rancher who spent years as a buyer for a big beef packer: If you crawl in bed with a rattlesnake and think you ain't going to be bit, then you're pretty stupid."

No premium for quality, no matter what goes into choice - steak - or select - hamburger. Don't bother to appraise the animals in pens. Carson quit as National cattle buyer when realized that and founded Maverick Feeders (shrinking free market/cash market)...but found the big 4 would prevail. When bidding the big meatpackers win most of the time, like a cartel.

Tyson's use of the growth hormone Zilmax little-known because public disclosure is not required.

Juices up the cattle's growth rate and yield of beef at slaughterhouses. Leaner and lower quality.

Cargill caved in 2012 and began accepting Zilmax-treated cattle. By the time Cargill folded, JB and National followed Tyson's lead.

Then in Aug 2013 notified feedlot operators to it wouldn't accept Z-treated cattle until further notice.

Cheap meat has changed rural America and American business.

Sec Ag Mike Espy, under Bill Clinton, indicted for bribery charges for accepting gifts from Tyson Foods.

At Tyson, earnings were falling due to decreased demand. Throttled back production, boneless skinless chicken breast rose 20 cents, profitable again. Under Donnie Smith.

Lawsuits that Tyson, ConAgra and Pilgrim's Pride manipulating scales at their slaughterhouses to underweigh loads of birds so they could underpay farmers. Tysons employee described how plant managers delivered lower-quality chicks to farmer the company considered troublemakers. A jury found that Tyson tactics depressed prices paid to ranchers and feedlots by billions of dollars, even as grocery store beef prices climbed.

Reform:

1996-2006: some attempts to curb vertical integration (market domination of meat oligarchy). Bill Heffernan 31 yrs research 1969-2000, shows why it's detrimental. Tracked debt and how the farmers felt - powerlessness has a toll.

Eric Tabor and Tom Miller 1995 in Iowa began investigating contract farming...rise of Monsanto, only 2 big

grain corps ADM and Cargill. Iowa wanted preserve some farmer freedom. Smithfield may have been main target, but all of the big corps stepped up to stave the effort that could affect the national meat industry (protested interference). Appeared nearly like serfdom.

Steve Moline, who had been a hog farmer, raised concerns over big corps controlling the breeding, as genetics are the key to livestock success. Leaving the farmers with just fattening the adult hogs was the lowest-profit part. Price collapse 1998, hog farmers met at Moline's home...they feared being spotted by corporate field technicians. Moline thought it was sufficient that in Iowa the corps could own the individual animals.

But in 1999, Smithfield bought a huge contractor of hog farms in Iowa, completing the whole circle of vertical integration, which Iowa banned. Iowa brought lawsuit against Smithfield and tried to establish the Producer Protection Act 1999 for 16 farm states (except Ark, home to Tyson)...the act required contract terms be posted publicly, 3 days to have an attorney review a contract). Problem: Smithfield rep told James R. Baker at GIPSA (antitrust regulator of meat industry est. in the 1920s meat trust age) the act is anti-free enterprise and would hamper market dev in China.

Antitrust is not anti-big, but is aimed at keeping competition from being eliminated.

So: simply some rules to minimize unfair competition. Instead of Act.

And powerful lobbyist don't lash out. You don't see it coming, just wake up one morning and it's over. "Didn't want to drive the hog industry out of Iowa."

Then in 2000, Tim Daschle SD: less stringent bill defeated by lobbyists, who also copied memo to agribusiness and food industry giants like Monsanto, ConAgra and industry associations.

Then Smithfield sued Iowa claiming ban against complete vert integration was a trade barrier affecting interstate commerce. Part of a (successful) effort to tamp down on state laws restricting corporate farming.

Smithfield was allowed to keep the vertical integration 10 years but with no tournament system and no canceling producer contracts and allow them to air grievances. Tyson, Cargill and Hormel signed similar agreements.

Integration not just a means of efficiency, but an instrument of power.

Disparity between state laws indicated that meaningful reform would be need to be made on the federal level. There was hope that new president Obama could institute reform 2007-2011. But with the financial meltdown, agricultural reform fell off the priority list. Climate: companies argued that mergers, cost cutting and market control were critical to staying profitable.

Obama appointed Tom Vilsack, former gov of Iowa, as Sec of Ag. Vilsack did stand behind Attorney General Tom Miller as he fought the rise of vertically integrated pork production. And wanted to reform the Packers and Stockyards Assn. Hard, though, to bring suit to assert USDA's power b/c working between depts and agencies (Dept of Justice). Christine Varney vowed vigorous antitrust enforcement to protect consumers.

Pushback: Trades like American Meat Institute and corps fought: reform would affect supply chain, cost jobs, profits needed to fund jobs, be competitive, turn back the clock on efficiency that made the U.S. the most innovative meat processing system, etc. So Vilsack's team lost control of the public narrative (at the time the Tea Party gained power, fighting health care reform). Then big business enlisted regular people -- including farmers who were favored in the tournament system -- to contact lawmakers to mirror the wishes of big business.

One farmer who was enlisted to speak out about the need for the tournament system in order to foster innovation and motivate farmers to work harder and invest in updating houses actually ended up declaring bankruptcy.

National Chicken Council said banning the tournament system would wipe out all innovation in the industry...paying farmers a bonus wasn't incentive enough to get farmers to work hard or update their houses - "there needed to be the threat of financial penalties."

Locavore movement helped keep indie farmers in business. Niche markets.

Vilsack's team fractured: reformers vs. pragmatists.

Managed during the rule revision to keep one key protection for farmers: force companies like Tyson to restrict the tournament to farmers who owned similar chicken houses.

Then Kansas Republican senator Pat Roberts framed the reform initiative as the USDA's attack on agriculture.

Obama admin backpedaled.

Don Tyson set sights on Brazil, India and China "like US in the 60s, eating more meat."

Don Tyson - running biography through the book. Powerful, self-made, created a new system of agriculture. Girlfriends and illegit children.

Boom year for Tyson 2011, 2012. Price hikes and production cuts became central to its business model. And, always, about how efficiently the producers can convert feed into meat.

Employs many, but their communities lag economically behind others in the same states.

Kevinthorson says

The title definitely oversells the excitement and reach of this book. In the end, it is a high-level history of the development of Tyson foods and its rise to a dominant position in the oligopolistic chicken and pork industries. The book's primary focus along the way is the pressure Tyson and its brethren put on its powerless rural farmers.

Well written, pretty informative, and as uplifting as you would expect!

Jeannie says

Very well researched. The scary truth about the huge corporations who control the worlds meat supply and so much more. It's disgusting to realize what we believe and what is really the truth is so widely separated. A real eye-opener that was easy to read and understand.

Cyrus says

I was already "the choir" for The Meat Racket in regards to the general overblown nature of the meat industry, but this book goes far beyond that.

This is a well-researched tale with elegant, simple prose that brings to life just how severely the uber-

consolidation of an industry has affected every player in it. The historical perspective is so important here to realize just why companies like Tyson do what they do - why their mottos *must* be "expand or expire." Yes, greed is involved, but it's also a survival instinct. If there were no Tyson, there'd be another Tyson, which the author shows by explaining how competitive the industrial meat industry has always been.

This book is just the story of one industry, but it functions well as a template for every other industry that has seen rapid consolidation, degradation of law, and anti-competitiveness.

Also, there is a person named "Joe Fred" in it. Hats off to you, Joe Fred.
