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## Tyson Foods Could Lose \$500 Million in Federal Contracts After Environmental Gaffe

by [Mike Hower](#)

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Tyson Foods is in risk of losing close to \$500 million in government contracts if found guilty in an ongoing criminal investigation by the Environmental Protection Agency over the recent release of toxic chemicals at a plant in Monett, Mo.

The food company has enjoyed more than \$4.7 billion in contract business from the U.S. government since 2000, but this could all end with the guilty findings in the Monett investigation.

The EPA probe came after Tyson was caught sending Aliment (an additive used in chicken feed) tainted wastewater into Monett's wastewater plant which released high levels of ammonia into the city's water system. The ammonia killed an estimated 100,000 fish within four miles of the site.

The company says it's cooperating with the EPA's investigation, and has worked with its feed mills on procedures designed to ensure this kind of accident doesn't happen again.

The Aliment incident occurred when the additive was hauled to the Monett site from its feed mill in Aurora, and inadvertently mixed in Tyson's pretreated wastewater system. Tyson allegedly did not immediately notify the city's wastewater plant of possible contamination, but instead tried to clean up the accident once the mistake was realized.

Scott Edwards, a litigator for the Food & Water Justice arm of Food and Water Watch, says Tyson and other poultry plants and wastewater gaffs are nothing new. Though this criminal probe is more serious in nature, Edwards says he doubts Tyson will actually lose its government contracts, given their influential poultry lobby. However, he says the EPA could send a strong signal by pulling contracts if Tyson is found criminally responsible.

This is not the first time Tyson has faced environmental issues. The nation's largest meat company operates more than 60 processing and slaughter facilities across the U.S. In Missouri, the company operates five facilities and employs some 4,700 workers. Two of those Missouri plants have recorded prior accidents in which Tyson settled.

Lawsuits are affecting change elsewhere in the food and beverage industry, specifically with labeling. Last year, PepsiCo announced that it will no longer label its Naked juices as being "all natural" after paying \$9 million to settle a lawsuit that claimed the drinks contain artificial ingredients. The company decided to drop the use of the word "natural" until more solid regulatory guidance emerges.

Mike Hower is Marketing Communications Manager at Carbon Lighthouse. With a background on both sides of the communications podium — as a journalist and strategic communicator — he is committed to helping organizations address climate change through sustainability innovation. Previously,... [\[Read more about Mike Hower\]](#)

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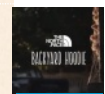
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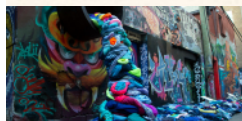
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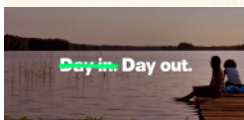
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