

March 19, 2019  
Letter of Support for SB 103

Dear Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

As a proud Oregonian, food and farming systems advocate, and environmentalist, I urge you to join me in upholding the values upon which Oregon was built —respect for the land, water and animals, support for vibrant rural communities, and protection for family farms —by supporting enactment of a legislative moratorium on new and expanding mega-dairies in Oregon (SB 103).

A rapidly changing dairy industry has fueled the rise of massive dairy factory farms in Oregon, often referred to as “mega-dairies.” These industrial facilities concentrate large numbers of animals and their waste, and [have brought with them dangerous manure spills, the risk of groundwater contamination, threats to animal welfare](#), and large amounts of air pollution that threaten public health and waterways including the iconic Columbia River Gorge. And as mega-dairies have become more prevalent, Oregon has lost many of its small and mid-sized family-owned dairies, once the backbone of rural Oregon’s economy.

While the “Right to Farm” in Oregon is woven into our very fabric and will always remain essential, it’s clear to me that these industrial facilities are not in fact farms at all, and they don’t deserve the same protections. Instead they are mechanized factories, built to maximize profits at the expense of our communities. [The consolidation of the dairy industry is wreaking havoc on generations of family farmers across the nation](#), and while Oregon is no stranger to this pattern—in fact the number of small and mid-sized dairies in Oregon has declined steeply since 1999; in 1997 there were 363 Grade A licensed dairies operating in the state, and in 2017 there were just 228 left, a decline of nearly 40% even as overall cow numbers increased—we still have time to ensure that our future is one filled with healthy family farms and free flowing streams, abundant salmon populations, clean air to breath, as well as accountability and respectable animal welfare policies. We still have time to ensure that the destruction caused by Lost Valley Farm in Boardman doesn’t become the norm in Oregon. We’re seeing that play out right now in many other states that prioritized the “Right to Farm” over human, animal, and environmental health, and it’s not what we want for our communities. The good news is it’s not too late for us to create a better way of putting food on our plates here in Oregon.

**Consider this:** A single facility that housed more than 30,000 cows in Boardman had the capacity to contaminate and poison the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area. Not only would this impact the immediate and surrounding communities, but another mega-dairy in this same location could negatively impact the [Umatilla River Vision](#) designed by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation(CTUIR) to help implement their First Foods mission.

The mission: *To protect, restore, and enhance the First Foods - **water, salmon, deer, cous, and huckleberry** - for the perpetual cultural, economic, and sovereign benefit of the CTUIR. We will accomplish this utilizing traditional ecological and cultural knowledge and science to inform: 1) population and habitat management goals and actions; and 2) natural resource policies and regulatory mechanisms.*

To ignore these alternative natural resource management mechanisms would be to ignore our history and turn our backs on our Native tribes. This is not an acceptable trade-off for the Right-to-Farm. The rights of a mega-dairy do not override the rights of those whose land we live on. A

moratorium will allow us the time to have these conversations not only in this community, but in others across the state as well.

The time is now. We can be on the right side of this issue.

**A moratorium will give legislators and regulators an overdue opportunity to evaluate the public health, economic, animal welfare, cultural, and environmental impacts of mega-dairies while providing Oregon's communities with important statutory protections.** I urge Oregon Senators and Representatives to support SB 103 for a moratorium on new and expanded mega-dairies in Oregon this legislative session.

With Gratitude,  
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