

Chair Beyer and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment,

My name is David Ewing and I am a volunteer for Food and Water Watch here in Bend, Oregon. Food and Water Watch was the first national organization to call for a nation wide moratorium on fracking. Locally here in Oregon, we are working hard in support of SB 583 which would enact a moratorium on new or expanding mega-dairies over 2,500 cows...

Mega-dairies threaten our climate, water, air, small scale farmers, rural minority Ag communities and the animals themselves:

1. Climate: Industrial Ag/mega-dairies are a significant contributor to the climate crisis via methane and other greenhouse gases. Mega-dairies cannot be part of Oregon's future if we want to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. Industry solutions like methane digesters are not the answer and only serve to entrench their bad/failing practices.
2. Water: A mega-dairy the size of Lost Valley (closed for over 200 permit violations) or the Easterday Dairy (currently in the permitting phase for the Lost Valley site) will use as much water as my city of Bend! Mega-dairies threaten to drain Oregon's water resources. Eastern Oregon, already contaminated in some parts with nitrates (Lower Umatilla Basin), has had a decades long drinking water contamination problem for its mostly marginalized minority communities. The enormous amount of manure produced by Mega-dairies results in overapplication - thus leeching into our precious ground water supplies. This cannot continue.
3. Air: Mega-dairies produce mega pollution. They foul our air with dangerous pollutants that harm health while spoiling scenic icons like the Columbia River Gorge with ammonia and haze. Will Oregon become known nationally as the state that allowed its air to be fouled because of industry pressure and an unwillingness to legislate?
4. Small Scale Dairy Farmers: Does Oregon value its family farms and a thriving regional economy? With only 200+ dairies remaining in a state that once had over 4,000, that answer is highly questionable. Cheap milk, driven by industry consolidation and lax regulation has forced thousands of smaller producers out of business in Oregon. We can and must change that by ensuring a level playing field so smaller producers can compete while protecting our environment.
5. Environmental Justice: No communities should suffer health harms for private profit. Our largest dairies are located in rural Latinx and Hispanic communities of color. These communities deal with the disproportionate impacts from industrial ag/mega-dairies in Oregon. Who will be their voice if not us?
6. Animal Ethics: Industrial ag/factory farms/mega-dairies are bad for animals, humans and the planet. Cows in mega-dairies typically live a shortened and miserable life. Confined to barns, small stalls, hard concrete floors and the relentless cycle of milking parlors until, ultimately, their death. Antibiotic use due to close confinement/man made environmental pressures/disease is now an international scale issue that we must all finally confront.

A mega-dairy moratorium is a much needed time-out. It halts the development of new mega-dairies and prevents the expansion of existing ones. It gives our elected officials the time needed to write meaningful legislation that currently does not exist or is insufficient. Letting this opportunity pass means kicking the can down the road once again which will only exacerbate the problem. Oregon needs urgent action to protect our state from the harmful spread of mega-dairies. I urge you to support SB 583!

Sincerely,

David Ewing
Food and Water Watch Volunteer
Bend, Oregon