



April 1, 2021

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

The Stand Up to Factory Farms coalition appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 583, which would enact a moratorium on new and expanding mega-dairies over 2,500 cows.

The Stand Up to Factory Farms coalition represents 11 different local, state and national organizations focused on a variety of communities and issues, ranging from family-scale farmers and rural communities, to including food systems, the environment, and animal welfare. Collectively, our groups represent more than 100,000 Oregonians. We are deeply concerned about the impacts mega-dairies have on Oregon's air, water, and climate, rural communities, small farmers, dairy workers, and animal welfare. A moratorium on new and expanded mega-dairies as proposed in SB 583 would allow Oregon time to put policies in place that ensure the protection of our air, water, wildlife, and climate, the economic viability of family farmers, and the humane treatment of animals.

Mega-dairies are not farms. They are industrial polluters, only barely accountable to weak and limited regulations that do little to protect Oregon's precious natural resources, local farms, and rural communities. We need stronger regulations to hold these mega-dairies accountable. But to get there, we need a pause, a moratorium, on the permitting of new and expanding mega-dairies.

Since the Threemile Canyon mega-dairy, one of the largest in the country, was constructed in the late 1990's, the number of Oregon's independent dairy farms has plummeted. In 1992, Oregon had 1,900 dairy farms, many of them small and mid-sized. Today, only 228 remain. Yet the number of dairy cows in Oregon has dramatically increased, concentrated in fewer and fewer mega-farms. With that concentration comes a massive amount of waste—6.5 billion pounds in 2019 alone, more than twice the amount of human waste produced in the Portland-metro area.

All that waste has to go somewhere. The current practice is to spread it on fields, often in quantities far exceeding the soil's ability to absorb the intended "nutrients". The excess leaches into the groundwater where it poisons nearby drinking water wells and runs off into our streams and rivers. The solution presented by the corporate dairy industry to manage their hazardous

waste is no better: methane digesters. Digesters use manure to produce enormous amounts of methane, both to be burned as any other fossil fuel and to be inevitably leaked into the atmosphere, while leaving behind concentrated manure for later spreading. These digesters will not solve mega-dairies' air and water pollution problems, and will only serve to incentivize the proliferation of mega-dairies.

We also cannot ignore the fact that the harms caused by mega-dairies do not fall equally on all Oregonians. These facilities disproportionately impact Black, Brown and Indigenous Oregonians. The communities near the state's biggest mega-dairies are primarily home to Latinx residents who struggle with contaminated well water and poisoned air. Our communities should not suffer these kinds of harm for private profit.

The State of Oregon already knows the clear and present danger that mega-dairies pose. The permitting, pollution, and subsequent closure of the Lost Valley mega-dairy was not an isolated incident. Rather, it is symptomatic of the greater problem: Oregon's weak regulations and practice of rubber-stamping mega-dairy permits makes it entirely too easy for these disasters to occur. The Lost Valley mega-dairy debacle cost Oregon taxpayers at least \$326,000. These funds were spent enforcing the bare minimum of environmental compliance and then, once it was clear that Lost Valley Farm needed to cease operations, in shutting the facility down. Lost Valley should have been a warning -- if we continue to permit these facilities, it will be the tax-paying citizens of Oregon who are left holding the bag.

The risk of more mega-dairies in Oregon is significant. As SB 583 has been considered in committee, the Oregon Department of Agriculture has been reviewing the permit for a new 30,000 cow mega-dairy facility, Easterday Farms, on the same site as the disastrous Lost Valley mega-dairy. This review is going forward despite widespread community opposition and fraud allegations against the family proposing the facility.

We are at a crossroads in Oregon agriculture. We urgently need a moratorium on mega-dairies so the state can enact policies to protect our air, water, and climate, family farms, and special places. We cannot let Oregon become the next hotspot for factory farming pollution.

Our coalition envisions an Oregon with a vibrant network of small, independent dairy farms, thriving rural communities, healthy rivers and streams, and clean air. A moratorium on mega-dairies would help us get there. On behalf of the Stand Up to Factory Farms coalition, and our 114,000 members and supporters across Oregon, I urge you to stop the spread of these dangerous mega-dairies by enacting a mega-dairy moratorium for Oregon.

Respectfully,

Emma Newton
Organizer
Stand Up to Factory Farms