

April 1st 2021

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

My name is Laura King. I am a private citizen living in Corvallis Oregon. I am a grandparent and care very much about sustainable farming practices, racial equity, good jobs and a green economy.

I am submitting written testimony in support of SB 583, to enact a moratorium to stop any further approvals of mega-dairies in the state of Oregon with dairy herds larger than 2500 cows. I live in Corvallis Oregon and I love my dairy products! But as a consumer it is important for me to know these products are delivered in a sustainable way. Unfortunately, large factory farm mega-dairies do not provide this means.

In the past few months I have become more educated about mega-dairies and am increasingly appalled that such operations are allowed to exist in our state; a state that touts itself as one of the greener states in the country with a commitment to curb climate change. Mega-dairy operations fly in the face of this and continued support for them is a hypocrisy. As we all become more informed I believe we can determine a better path.

A few months ago, I was quite ignorant about this topic and happily enjoyed my favorite Tillamook products. After attending webinars provided by Food & Water Watch & Stand Up to Factory Farms, and then doing some of my own research I am now quite alarmed about the harm that Mega-Dairies are delivering to local communities (economic, health) and our collective environment. Additionally, there are hidden costs that will likely become a government burden down the road if we don't have a more holistic view. It is critical that we understand the broader implications of these factory farms and pivot to a more sustainable path that delivers our beloved dairy products while also putting Oregon on the map in leading a green economy.

Here is what I have learned and I submit it for your review in the hope that it increases your knowledge of the situation so you can create and support legislation that will enable a more sustainable dairy business model that is good for Oregonians and our climate.

First current state – Oregon has a lot of mega-dairies! Below is a table that shows the number of mega-dairies presently in operation in Oregon. This does not include the failed Lost Farms that has now been purchased by another factory farm who is seeking the Oregon Dept of Agriculture's approval to restart-up operations.

DAIRY	COUNTY	HERD SIZE
HAZENBERG DAIRY	MARION	4,800
PLATT'S OAK HILL DAIRY LLC	POLK	5,155
HOGAN DAIRY FARMS	TILLAMOOK	5,200
RICKREALL DAIRY LLC	POLK	6,000
JVB DAIRY	MORROW	7,200

DAIRY	COUNTY	HERD SIZE
WINDY RIDGE LLC	KLAMATH	8,040
SAGE HOLLOW RANCH LLC	MORROW	8,700
H 4 FARMS INC	UMATILLA	12,900
THREEMILE CANYON FARMS LLC CRD	MORROW	28,000
THREEMILE CANYON FARMS LLC WCD	MORROW	36,100

Second mega-dairies have negative impacts on our communities and climate as noted below. These impacts intertwine with themes top of mine for all politicians these days as they seek to meet the needs of their constituents, namely: jobs, health, climate change, racial equity, poverty.

- Mega-dairies displace the small farmer hurting local economies and their tax revenue; for example, data indicates small farms decreased by 56% with the installation of Three Mile Farms. What happened to these farmers, their families, their towns? This hurts local economies, kills generational farming and it eliminates the opportunity for safer, cleaner, sustainable farming practices.
- Mega-dairies pollute the water and air around them. They contaminate community water supplies and private wells with dangerous levels of nitrates harming > 10 ppm causing people to get sick, especially infants, the elderly and people with immune disorders. They pollute ammonia into the air impacting air quality for people to breath as well as contributing to the Columbia Gorge haze.
- Mega-dairies are a significant contributor to green house gases (e.g. methane). And methane digesters do not capture green gas emissions from cows themselves so this is not a valid solution.
- Oregon's largest mega-dairies are often situated in rural Latinx and Hispanic communities of color having a disproportionate impact on the economic and well-being (health) of these populations by for-profit factory farms who have accountability in addressing this.

I believe there is an opportunity for bipartisan legislation to meet this moment. Rural communities are most directly impacted by these mega-dairies and many in our state are advocating for green economy and slowing climate change. Supporting SB 583 a moratorium on Mega-Dairies is a first step.

Thank you for considering my input.

Sincerely,

Laura King PhD

Corvallis, OR

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

[Introduction]:

My name is _____, and I am [a member or position with an organization/a farmer/a constituent of Sen. Beyer or other committee member/live near a mega-dairy]. [Insert a sentence or two about your organization/group/yourself.] I am writing in support of SB 583, which would enact a moratorium on new or expanding mega-dairies over 2,500 cows.

[Explain the problem of mega-dairies, and how it directly impacts you (if applicable)]

Your story and your personal reasons for supporting this issue is the most important part of the testimony. But if you want some facts and figures, here are some points you can include about different problems caused by mega-dairies:

- [Water Quantity] Mega-dairies threaten to drain Oregon's water resources. A mega-dairy with 30,000 cows uses more water than the City of Bend. Our rivers, streams, and aquifers, especially in Eastern Oregon, cannot support that kind of water extraction.
- [Water Quality/Pollution] The sheer amount of manure produced by mega-dairies---6.5 billion pounds in 2019 alone---results in overapplication and leaching into our groundwater. This contaminates community water supplies and private wells with dangerous levels of nitrates. There has been decades-long drinking water contamination in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area, driven in significant part by mega-dairies and irrigated agriculture, demonstrating that existing state laws and regulations have failed to prevent this pollution. Many residents cannot afford expensive water filtration systems or bottled water, but we all need clean water to survive. Our laws and policy must reflect this value.
- [Climate] Mega-dairies are a significant contributor to the climate crisis, discharging methane and other greenhouse gasses. Mega-dairies cannot be part of Oregon's future if we want to do our part to prevent the worst effects of climate change. Even facilities that use methane digesters do not avoid these climate impacts. Digesters do nothing to

reduce other air emissions, can't capture the greenhouse gas emissions from cows themselves, and at best can only capture the additional methane created by the lagoon-and-spray system mega-dairies use. Instead, digesters create a market for factory farm gas, which incentivizes larger herds and only further entrenches mega-dairies.

- [Air Quality] Mega-dairies produce mega-pollution. They foul our air with dangerous pollutants that harm health, and pollute our special places like the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Mega-dairies are major contributors of ammonia and haze in the Columbia River Gorge.
- [Environmental Justice] Oregon's largest mega-dairies are often situated in rural Latinx and Hispanic communities of color. It's long been shown nationwide that low income rural communities of color suffer disproportionate impacts from factory farms and mega-dairies in Oregon are no exception. No communities should suffer health harms for private profit.
- [Impact on farmers] Oregon values family farms and vibrant regional agriculture, but by flooding the market with cheap milk, mega-dairies contribute to the alarming loss of Oregon dairies: an average of nine family dairy farms went under every month between 2002 and 2007, with a total loss of a third of licensed dairies since 1997. We need to ensure a level playing field so that Oregon's next generation of small dairy farmers can survive and thrive.
- [Animal Ethics] Cows in mega-dairies typically live their entire life indoors in huge buildings, only moving between tiny stalls and milking parlors until they are eventually killed because they are "unproductive." In mega-dairies, cows often stand on hard concrete, which leads to foot damage and exacerbates lameness. And being intensely confined on a large scale means massive amounts of antibiotics - which can be passed along to humans - are required to treat common diseases in confined cattle, like mastitis.
[Explain why a mega-dairy moratorium would solve this problem]

Example:

A mega-dairy moratorium would halt the development of new mega-dairies, and prevent the

expansion of existing ones. That means that a mega-dairy moratorium will at least ensure that this destructive method of dairy production doesn't spread further within our state and will give us an opportunity to address the existing harms from mega-dairies. Given the gaps in our laws, we need to do more to protect all Oregonians before it is too late.

[Closing]

Oregon needs urgent action to protect our state from the spread of mega-dairies. I/we urge you to support SB 583 and other legislative proposals for a mega-dairy moratorium. Sincerely,

Name

Position title / Role

Organization

OR

Name

City, Oregon

NOTES:

High nitrate levels, above 10 parts per million (ppm), in drinking water can cause people to get sick, especially infants, the elderly and people with immune disorders. High nitrate levels reduce red blood cells' ability to carry oxygen. This can cause methemoglobin in infants, the elderly and immune deficient individuals. Methemoglobin symptoms include headache, dyspnea, lightheadedness, weakness, confusion, palpitations and chest pain.

or the sake of both the environment and for rural people, we ought to be promoting small and medium agriculture as opposed to industrial. Having more family farms and less industrial operations is easier on the environment and better on the economy. Family farmers have a vested interest in protecting the environment long term -- they're not just interested in turning a profit and leaving the area. Having more small scale farms over one big operation provides just as much opportunity for employment, but longer term opportunities, seeing as the smaller operations have multigenerational intentions," Mitch said.

56% decline in small farms since Three Mile Farm started its factory farm operation

As large-scale, consolidated operations move in, small to medium sized, independent producers go out of business. Big operations scale up supply, drive down price, and do it — like in the case of Lost Valley — by not paying for the full cost of the environmental damage they create. Those costs are passed on to the state to clean up, or show up in hospital bills for sickened neighbors drinking polluted water.