



Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
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SB 583 TESTIMONY

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

SENATOR LEE BEYER, CHAIR

April 1, 2021

Chair Beyer, Vice Chair Findley and Members of the Committee, my name is Tami Kerr and I am the Executive Director for the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association. I offer the following testimony in opposition to SB 583 on behalf of the nearly 200 hardworking dairy farms in Oregon. These conventional and organic Grade A farmers are proud of the care they provide to their animals, are proud of the high-quality milk they produce every day, and our producers are proud of their care of the environment.

Every single Grade A dairy farm in Oregon is a family-owned business. Some are small and some are large, but all are family businesses. When I visit farms, there are often two and three generations that are working together. These are not industrial operations.

Threemile Canyon Farms, the largest dairy in the state, was the first farm in the nation to receive a perfect 100% score on their Animal Care evaluation and in 2020, Threemile was a recipient of a National Dairy Sustainability award. Our farms need to be evaluated by their compliance, not by their size.

ODFA supports the long-standing CAFO program that is regulated by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Quality, for the purpose of protecting the quality of water in the state. The CAFO Program is very effective with a high rate of compliance by dairy farmers.

For a historical perspective, the CAFO Program has been in place in Oregon for the past 27 years. Oregon is the only State to require both a CAFO Permit and an Animal Waste Management Permit (AWMP) for all Grade A producers. By comparison, the state of Washington has more than double the number of cows than we do and fewer than 20 dairy farms in Washington have CAFO permits.

We consider the manure produced by our animals to be a nutrient. Every time our producers apply nutrients to their fields, they are required to record the date, rate of application, and method of application. They must test the nutrient, take soil samples and make applications at an agronomic rate for the crop they are growing. Dairy farmers are also required to complete an annual report. Producers are inspected at least once every ten months by ODA CAFO inspectors and more frequently for larger farms.

For the record, there have been statements about the number of dairy farms that have closed in the last 20 years. When we discuss the number of dairy farms in Oregon, we use the number of farms that have Grade A licenses from the Oregon Department of Agriculture. In 1998, there were 326 Grade A dairy farms. In 2018, there were 210 Grade A dairy farms. Oregon lost 116 farms in the last 20 years, that averages 5.8 farms per year. In the early 1990's, there were 500 dairy farms in the state. With the implementation of the CAFO program in 1993 and the closure of Grade B dairy farms, many producers decided they either couldn't make the required investment or chose not to and closed. Regulations were responsible for closing more than 100 dairy farms in the 1990's.

I understand the public's concern for animal welfare, water quality and air quality. Dairy farmers value and prioritize these issues as well. Our farmers are doing great work on many levels and continue to adopt best management practices as new research becomes available. Dairy farmers are committed to being an environmental solution. Our farmers are leaders in using upcycled byproducts such as brewers' grains and food processing waste for animal feed, savings millions of tons from going into landfills. The U.S. dairy community is committed to providing the world with responsibly produced, nutritious dairy foods that nourish people, strengthen communities and foster a sustainable future.

The system works, dairy farmers have an extremely high rate of compliance with the CAFO program. When large farms want to expand, a notice is distributed, and a public hearing is scheduled. There is always an opportunity for public participation. Please don't risk the growth and success of our family farms with more restrictions.

Thank You.