



March 3, 2023

RE: Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 85

Chair Golden and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources:

For more than 20 years, Threemile Canyon Farms has responsibly provided for the nutritional needs of a growing population. We know that what sets us apart isn't our size or what we farm, but rather, how we do it. We farm sustainably in a big way, combining dairy operations with conventional and organic crop farming to create a closed-loop system. Our zero-waste, values-driven operation reflects our commitment to protecting the environment, caring for our animals, and supporting our team and our community. Since our founding in 1998, Threemile has routinely gone beyond regulatory environmental requirements, exceeding established standards. Consequently, Threemile has been recognized for our commitment to sustainable practices through national trade organizations and independent animal welfare audits.

SB 85 (-1) is unnecessary and unfair to those that operate responsibly and ethically. The amendment proposes to arbitrarily prohibit the Oregon Department of Agriculture from issuing Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) permits to operations that have over a certain number of animals. However, based on the testimony from the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and the Oregon Water Resources Department to this very Committee, it was demonstrated that our state has one of the strongest CAFO programs in the country and protective of Oregon's environment. For that reason, Oregon elected and public officials should be proud the CAFO program has and continues to protect our state's natural resources while retaining a robust economy that provides \$5.01 billion in agricultural production and 616,341 jobs ([Oregon State Board of Agriculture 2021 report](#)).

There is a concerning trend emerging where legislation seeks to pit so-called "family farms" against other types of operations, namely "industrial" CAFOs that are depicted as cold, faceless businesses. This is a false narrative. The people who own or work at farms across Oregon are family members who are dedicated to the land and to providing the utmost care for the well-being of the animals. At Threemile, we have many three-generation families who are part of our team. For example, the patriarch of the Madrigal family, Adolfo, emigrated from Mexico and found a job on what would become Threemile, more than 30 years ago. Now, eight other members of the Adolfo's family have cultivated successful, managerial careers at Threemile. We have other team members who want to carry out their longstanding family tradition of working in agriculture. These families are just one part of what makes us special, and part of a larger family of farmers in Oregon who are good stewards of the land.

It seems that every legislative session, special interest groups make statements to use a farm's size as a proxy for determining whether that farm is a responsible actor to its employees, animals, and the environment. Farm size is NOT a determining factor of a farm's ethic. We have demonstrated time and time again that we continue to make significant investments to protect our environment. At Threemile our animals, our team and our community.



- **We protect water resources.** Threemile has designed its operations to take care of Lower Umatilla Basin's water supply for the long term. We strictly adhere to a zero-discharge requirement, so no dairy waste enters streams or groundwater sources. Additionally, we recycle and reuse all non-potable water. We collect water used to flush dairy waste and process it for use in our irrigation systems to naturally fertilize organic and feed crops, reducing our reliance on traditional fossil fuel-based fertilizers.
- **We excel in animal welfare.** We are deeply committed to superior quality of life for each animal under our care. Our herd always has access to fresh water and feed; noise levels are kept at a minimal level and human contact is minimized. Newly remodeled milking parlors have temperature controls to keep our animals comfortable and they are housed in open freestall barns with soft bedding. These efforts have been recognized by the high marks we've received for our Animal Welfare Program. Over the past ten years, Validus, an internationally recognized animal welfare auditor, has performed an annual audit at Threemile to ensure we are adhering to animal welfare standards. We have never scored below 97 percent and in October 2022, for the second time, we earned perfect scores in all testing categories.
- **We reduce waste material and emissions.** Threemile is an innovator and has made a significant investment in a methane digester that converts waste to renewable natural gas. The digester sequesters the equivalent annual greenhouse gas emissions from 28,875 passenger vehicles (136,000 metric tons per year of CO₂). It would take 160,061 acres of forest land to have the same carbon sequestering impact. We also implement many practices, such as planting cover crops, that protect soil health while also naturally sinking carbon. The sum of crop plantings, farming practices and digester sequestration makes Threemile a leader in helping Oregon move toward a lower carbon emitting future.
- **We take care of our team and our community.** Threemile has been a dedicated member of the local Boardman and greater Morrow County community for more than 20 years. We are committed to being a trusted employer and good neighbor as well as a steady contributor to the economy and county tax base. We provide strong career opportunities; farm and livestock hourly employees enjoy benefits as members of the United Farm Workers union under which they enjoy a competitive wage, as well as health and welfare benefits.

When it comes to holding our businesses to high standards, Oregonians know that facts matter. And, despite claims to the contrary, Oregon needs farms of all sizes to meet the nutritional needs of a growing population. A moratorium on CAFO permits will not improve the environment but instead, hurt thousands of families that rely on CAFOs for jobs, community support and a strong source of locally produced food.

Sincerely,

Bill Antilla
President, Threemile Canyon Farms