

Submitter: Zoe Griffith

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources

Measure: SB85

Senator Golden, Senator Girod, and members of the committee,

I am a beginner farmer in support of a full moratorium on large tier 2 CAFOs as described in Senate Bill 85-1. Access to farmable land and water are two of the most pressing barriers my peers and I face when seeking to begin our farms. Allowing the unchecked proliferation of large tier 2 CAFOs into the same playing field as small farmers and ranchers -- including our existing, family-run CAFOs -- would exacerbate the issue.

Despite how much precipitation we think we've been getting, the current U.S. Drought Monitor Conditions for Oregon reports 91% of the state is still experiencing anywhere from an "abnormally dry" season to extreme drought. This scale ranges from low reservoirs and expensive irrigation, to fallowed fields and increased hay prices, to dangerous wildfire activity and reduced power generation from dams. We are all too familiar with these.

Like many exemptions originally created with the intent of helping Oregon's earliest family farms and ranches, the Livestock Watering Groundwater Exemption is exploited by CAFOs in Oregon. These facilities are able to withdraw an unlimited amount of Oregon's groundwater without a permit or regulatory oversight. As other states are tightening up restrictions on groundwater withdrawal, Oregon's exemptions look like prey to out-of-state factory farms.

Moreover, according to the EPA, states with high concentrations of CAFOs experience on average 20 to 30 serious water contamination problems per year as a result of manure management problems (EPA, 2001).

Water contamination can occur via leakage, runoff, overflow events, or via soil erosion because common contaminants from concentrated feeding operations like these can bind to the soil. Soil that is degraded, as happens at these facilities, is more susceptible to erosion. Please do not sacrifice some of our best farm land to this cause, especially when our agricultural communities are already fending off land grabs from developers and other industry. We need an all-species moratorium on new, large tier 2 CAFOs yesterday so we can assess the risks and benefits associated with CAFOs and how best to proceed. Two years is not an adequate amount of time for the proper research to be conducted, nor is this only a poultry problem.

Independent farms already have to compete with food conglomerates for resources. Allowing the proliferation of new CAFOs into the state would throw this playing field way out of balance and affect all of our communities. Please stand up for us — for farmers, for rural communities, and for the cities we feed. Do not give in to industry pressure.

Thank you,

Zoe Griffith