

I am in support of SB 85-1.

We have a chance to stop some of the damage that changes in agribusiness have caused to rural communities and family farmers. Not only is factory farming damaging to the localized environment, the carbon impact of factory farming has been clearly shown. I feel like these issues are basic fact and at this point we all know the damage that they cause.

I would like to draw your attention to the anti-capitalist aspect of the industrialized/factory farm business model, and potential security threats they pose. Gigantic operations, like the ones SB 85-1 would put a halt to expanding, take extreme sums of money to initialize and the astounding output that they produce floods the market making it impossible for small farms, family farms, and new farmers to compete. They essentially monopolize and centralize our food system. If the only producer is the biggest, and they have the market share they can set their own price, which is bad for consumers. The supply and demand relationship is also completely skewed, because these factory farms don't sell to consumers, they sell to retailers. In practice retailers don't necessarily buy what they can sell, they buy what they need to keep the meat and dairy cases full, leading to huge amounts of food waste. When food in these systems is wasted, the energy it took to produce that food, the labor that it took to produce that food, the grains, the fuel, the resources are also wasted. Livestock diseases spread rapidly through confinement systems and the more we rely on them the shakier our food foundation becomes. Diseases can then spread outside of those factory farms and take out the smaller producers. Losing 500 cows on one of these gigantic confinement operations may not mean so much to the business of the mega dairy, but losing 2 of 5 cows on a small farm can take years to recover from. If one Large Tier 2 confinement farm goes down, the entire system is thrown into shock – and if small farms are out competed and hard to come by there is no alternative for the consumer. If our food system is so centralized that we have no alternative then we are vulnerable.

The water quality emergency in Morrow County is clear and practical evidence of the direct environmental harm that mega dairies cause. When so many cows are put in one place, the urine and manure becomes a difficult thing to manage. The ground to cow ratio is blown, and usually in these confinement systems, animals are in buildings with concrete or metal grated floors, not pasture. Even if they have access to pasture they are housed in confinement, as is the definition we're working under. On a small scale farm, this loop is closed by the soil, which harbors microbes that break down waste into nutrients that can then be used by plants.

The same factors apply when talking about pork meat production and chicken meat production. We're talking about huge amounts of waste centralized in one location, without the option of naturally managing on-site. Bladder bags full of urine and feces need to be trucked off site. These bladder bags are not little bitty bags, but fill entire semi-trailer flat-beds.

I have worked for Foster Farms, in every department from Live Hang, to Evisceration, to various Pack Lines. The chickens that came in were often burned from sitting in their own urine and feces, and with infections in their legs and or wings. In Evisceration, we simply removed the infected appendage and skinned the carcass, leaving the breast to continue down the line and be sold. The trucks that came to the plant, loaded with cages, smelled worse than anything I've ever smelled – worse than death. On top of that, the regard for human health and safety was absolutely abhorrent. I saw friends mutilated on the equipment, fingers removed, or entire muscle groups striped out from hands and arms, and I myself came down with lung, stomach, and eye infections from the unsanitary conditions.

I am no longer a vegetarian, but I did abstain from meat, dairy, and eggs after working at Foster Farms – for years. Until I became more learned and literate on the subject of farming and aware that there are alternatives to factory farmed meat, eggs, and dairy. I began buying from small farmers and learning more about the economics and ecologies of farming.

We are so very fortunate to have such a diverse and strong farming community in Oregon, but family farms are going extinct and have been since the 1970s – they face daunting odds. In Oregon we have rangeland and pasture that's unequalled, it's such a gift to the people and animals that call these places home. I want to keep our pastures healthy and working by keeping farmers employed. I don't want to see Oregon go the way of Iowa and Wisconsin. If we continue to let huge corporations have their way with the industry, we're on a path to monoculture crops and sick animals and lower and lower standards of food quality and animal welfare, with fewer options for consumers and fewer employment opportunities in the agriculture and food production economies.

Of course, there's also the less tangible, longer term impacts of climate change that we're threatened with by these over farming methods – I don't want to short-sell this at all. It's a big problem. But, with our limited time together, I wanted to let you know about my biggest concerns. My biggest concerns are for my rural neighbors, period. Climate change goes with that, hand-in hand, but the economic and environmental impacts for rural people are on the very now and very near scale.

Thank you very much for reading this.