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Oregon Department of Environmental Quality Fails to Address Mega-Dairy Emissions in New Climate Plan

Despite pressure from advocates, DEQ proposes to continue decades of inaction on ag pollution

Salem, OR - [Stand Up to Factory Farms](#), a broad coalition of family farming, environmental, food safety, and animal welfare organizations, criticizes the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for its failure to include mega-dairy emissions in its [greenhouse gas reduction plan](#), which it submitted to the Governor's office on Friday. The plan is required under Governor Brown's recent [Executive Order 20-04](#), which directs state agencies to propose how they will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Governor Brown's Executive Order requires agencies to do everything within their authority to reduce Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions to [45% below 1990 levels by 2035](#). The DEQ plan would attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for several categories of sources. However, despite a letter from Stand Up to Factory Farms pointing out that mega-dairies are a significant but unregulated source of greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon, and that stronger regulation of this source has been needed for years, DEQ's plan does nothing to address that source of emissions.

Mega-dairies generate potent greenhouse gases, such as methane, carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide [that contribute significantly to Oregon's climate change](#) emissions. In 2018 alone, Oregon mega-dairies produced [5 billion pounds](#) of manure — 42 times the waste produced by the population of Portland. This massive amount of manure is also a significant source of air pollution [that contributes to regional haze](#) in the Columbia River Gorge.

"Industrial-scale milk production is not our only option. Practices like rotational grazing on permanent pasture sequester carbon in the soil, helping to mitigate climate change. If DEQ is serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, mega-dairies must be held clearly accountable for their contributions so that regenerative farming practices have a fighting chance." said **Shari Sirkin, Executive Director of Friends of Family Farmers**.

Stand up To Factory Farms followed its letter with testimony at the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission's May 7th meeting, again urging DEQ not to overlook the emissions from the mega-dairy industry. Though DEQ will not begin implementing its plan until 2021 due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, today's announcement confirms that DEQ is moving forward with a climate plan that leaves a critical, and growing, source of climate pollution unregulated.

"DEQ's climate action plan should address the inconvenient truth that industrial animal agriculture, including mega-dairies, are major sources of greenhouse gas emissions," said **Brian Posewitz, director of Humane Voters Oregon**. "Instead, DEQ's plan pursues only strategies that are either easy or have limited political opposition, which is not enough to address the climate crisis we are in."

The plan comes as DEQ and the Oregon Department of Agriculture consider a permit application for a new mega-dairy in Morrow County, on the site of the disastrous Lost Valley Farm. The proposed facility, Easterday Farms, would be a new significant source of climate change emissions. Under DEQ's proposal, all of those emissions would remain unregulated.

"Oregon lawmakers have a duty to Oregonians to protect our climate for future generations, but they abdicate that duty when they ignore carbon emissions from industrial mega-dairies," said **Amy van Saun, senior attorney with Center for Food Safety**. "We cannot afford to sit around with an apathetic federal government – we must hold our state policymakers to a higher standard."

Farmers are facing serious challenges to adapt to supply chain changes and protect workers during the COVID-19 crisis. But DEQ has postponed implementation of its climate plan, and the agency has time to ensure that new requirements would not adversely affect mega-dairies' ability to prioritize worker and consumer safety.

"DEQ has found excuses to ignore air pollution from mega-dairies for over a decade, and now proposes to flout an Executive Order demanding it use all available authority to continue ignoring it," said **Tarah Heinzen, senior attorney with Food & Water Watch**. "The agency's inaction is unacceptable. Oregon cannot afford to let another opportunity to meaningfully address the climate change impacts of industrial dairies pass it by."

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[Stand Up to Factory Farms](#) is a coalition of local, state and national organizations concerned about the harmful impacts of mega-dairies on Oregon's family farms, communities, the environment and animal welfare. We seek legislation or an executive order establishing a moratorium on new or expanded mega-dairies until policies are in place that meaningfully protect our air, water, and climate and ensure the humane treatment of animals and the economic viability of family farmers.