

June 16, 2020

Governor Kate Brown
Office of the Governor
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Salem, OR 97301-4047

Richard Whitman, Director
Oregon Department of Environmental
Quality
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*Via email to: Amira Streeter, Natural Resources Policy Advisor, Office of Governor
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*CC: Richard Whitman, Director, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality:
Whitman.Richard@deq.state.or.us, Alexis Taylor, Director, Oregon Department of
Agriculture: ataylor@oda.state.or.us*

Re: Climate Change and Mega-Dairy Emissions

Dear Governor Brown,

On behalf of 20 rural advocacy, family farm, environmental, animal welfare, public health, and wildlife protection organizations and our hundreds of thousands of Oregon members and supporters, we write to urge you to be a true climate leader by addressing emissions from Oregon's largest industrial dairies and taking immediate action to protect Oregon from the other harms of factory farms by enacting a mega-dairy moratorium.

Industrial mega-dairies are bad for Oregon. They cause water and air pollution, take large amounts of water from our rivers, streams and aquifers, contaminate drinking water, subject cows to over-confinement, excessive production demands and other abuses, and push family-scale farms out of business.

Mega-dairies also are a main contributor to climate change. Livestock production is responsible for 14.5% of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions globally,¹ and is a dominant source of

¹ Gerber, P. J. et al. (2013). Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock: A Global Assessment of Emissions and Mitigation Opportunities. Rome: FAO at xii.

methane gas emissions in the United States.² Manure management is the fastest growing source of methane emissions, because factory farms that store waste in giant pits where anaerobic conditions lead to methane production are rapidly replacing family farms without these harmful waste management systems. Between 1990 and 2017, methane emissions from dairy cattle manure rose by 134 percent.³ Facilities that use biogas digesters do not avoid these harmful impacts, or eliminate their significant contributions to climate change. To the contrary, digesters entrench the factory farm model by creating a market for their waste and committing to large capital investments, and they also are heavily subsidized by Oregon taxpayers through expensive tax credits.⁴ Mega-dairies cannot be part of Oregon’s future if we want to do our part to prevent the worst effects of climate change.

In 2017 the Oregon Department Agriculture (ODA), despite widespread public opposition, approved Lost Valley Farm to disastrous ends. The Lost Valley Farm mega-dairy put our public health and environment at risk, resulted in unacceptable conditions for a large number of animals, and was a huge new source of completely unregulated climate emissions. Lost Valley’s approval and subsequent shutdown was a systemic failure, revealing the inability of Oregon’s CAFO permitting process to deny a mega-dairy that the state should never have approved, and subsequently the state’s inability to properly regulate its pollution.

Despite this, no action has since been taken to prevent Oregonians from the harms of future mega-dairy facilities, or to require existing mega-dairies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. In 2018, Oregon mega-dairies produced 5 billion pounds of manure — 42 times the waste produced by the population of Portland.⁵ Now, ODA is considering allowing a new mega-dairy, Easterday Farms, on Lost Valley’s site -- even as you direct state agencies to do everything they can to address climate change.

Permitting new mega-dairies in Oregon would only exacerbate the numerous problems discussed above, including climate change, air and water pollution, water-supply problems, mistreatment of animals, loss of small family farms and harm to rural communities.

We urge you to fight for an Oregon free of the worst effects of climate change -- and to do that, we cannot continue to ignore the significant pollution that comes from Oregon’s mega-dairies. We ask you to be a true climate leader by enacting a mega-dairy moratorium immediately.

² U.S. EPA. “Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks; 1990-2009.” Table 2-1. April 15, 2010 at 2 to 4.

³ EPA. “Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2017” 430-R-19-001. April 11, 2019 at 2-19.

⁴ ODA, Bovine Manure Tax Credit,

<https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/NaturalResources/Pages/BovineManureTaxCredit.aspx>.

⁵ ODA (2018); U.S. EPA. “Risk Assessment Evaluation for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations.” EPA/600/R-04/042. May 2004 at 9; World Population Review. “Portland, Oregon Population 2018.” 2018 at 2

Sincerely,

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Laura Jean Largent, Acting Executive Director
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