



Mega-Dairy Moratorium Testimony Template

[Greeting] Consider something like the following:

April 1, 2021

Chair Beyer and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment,

[Introduction]:

My name is _____, and I am [a member or position with an organization/a farmer/a constituent of Sen. Beyer or other committee member/live near a mega-dairy]. [Insert a sentence or two about your organization/group/yourself.] I am writing in **support of SB 583**, which would enact a moratorium on new or expanding mega-dairies over 2,500 cows.

[Explain the problem of mega-dairies, and how it directly impacts you (if applicable)]

Your story and your personal reasons for supporting this issue is the most important part of the testimony. But if you want some facts and figures, here are some points you can include about different problems caused by mega-dairies:

- **[Water Quantity]** Mega-dairies threaten to drain Oregon's water resources. A mega-dairy with 30,000 cows uses more water than the City of Bend. Our rivers, streams, and aquifers, especially in Eastern Oregon, cannot support that kind of water extraction.
- **[Water Quality/Pollution]** The sheer amount of manure produced by mega-dairies---6.5 billion pounds in 2019 alone---results in overapplication and leaching into our groundwater. This contaminates community water supplies and private wells with dangerous levels of nitrates. There has been decades-long drinking water contamination in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area, driven in significant part by mega-dairies and irrigated agriculture, demonstrating that existing state laws and regulations have failed to prevent this pollution. Many residents cannot afford expensive water filtration systems or bottled water, but we all need clean water to survive. Our laws and policy must reflect this value.
- **[Climate]** Mega-dairies are a significant contributor to the climate crisis, discharging methane and other greenhouse gasses. Mega-dairies cannot be part of Oregon's future if we want to do our part to prevent the worst effects of climate change. Even facilities that use methane digesters do not avoid these climate impacts. Digesters do nothing to reduce other air emissions, can't capture the greenhouse gas emissions from cows

themselves, and at best can only capture the additional methane created by the lagoon-and-spray system mega-dairies use. Instead, digesters create a market for factory farm gas, which incentivizes larger herds and only further entrenches mega-dairies.

- **[Air Quality]** Mega-dairies produce mega-pollution. They foul our air with dangerous pollutants that harm health, and pollute our special places like the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Mega-dairies are major contributors of ammonia and haze in the Columbia River Gorge.
- **[Environmental Justice]** Oregon's largest mega-dairies are often situated in rural Latinx and Hispanic communities of color. It's long been shown nationwide that low income rural communities of color suffer disproportionate impacts from factory farms and mega-dairies in Oregon are no exception. No communities should suffer health harms for private profit.
- **[Impact on farmers]** Oregon values family farms and vibrant regional agriculture, but by flooding the market with cheap milk, mega-dairies contribute to the alarming loss of Oregon dairies: an average of nine family dairy farms went under every month between 2002 and 2007, with a total loss of a third of licensed dairies since 1997. We need to ensure a level playing field so that Oregon's next generation of small dairy farmers can survive and thrive.
- **[Animal Ethics]** Cows in mega-dairies typically live their entire life indoors in huge buildings, only moving between tiny stalls and milking parlors until they are eventually killed because they are "unproductive." In mega-dairies, cows often stand on hard concrete, which leads to foot damage and exacerbates lameness. And being intensely confined on a large scale means massive amounts of antibiotics - which can be passed along to humans - are required to treat common diseases in confined cattle, like mastitis.

[Explain why a mega-dairy moratorium would solve this problem]

Example:

A mega-dairy moratorium would halt the development of new mega-dairies, and prevent the expansion of existing ones. That means that a mega-dairy moratorium will at least ensure that this destructive method of dairy production doesn't spread further within our state and will give us an opportunity to address the existing harms from mega-dairies. Given the gaps in our laws, we need to do more to protect all Oregonians before it is too late.

[Closing]

Oregon needs urgent action to protect our state from the spread of mega-dairies. I/we urge you to support SB 583 and other legislative proposals for a mega-dairy moratorium.

Sincerely,

Name
Position title / Role
Organization

OR

Name
City, Oregon

You can submit written testimony in support of SB 583 by going [here](#) and selecting the 4/1/2021 meeting of the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment. You can contact John Aspray (jaspray@fwwatch.org) or Emma Newton (enewton@fwwatch.org) if you have any questions!