



March 21st, 2023

Re: SB 85-1, which would enact a moratorium on the permitting of certain new and expanding confined animal feeding operations.

Dear Legislator,

The undersigned organizations urge you to support the enactment of SB 85-1 and keep the bill strong. SB 85, with the -1 amendment, would put a moratorium on the largest new and expanding factory farms in Oregon. We do not support the -3 amendment. Our organizations work to protect Oregon's environment, family farms, rural economies, frontline rural communities, public health, and animal welfare. Collectively we represent over 460,000 Oregonians.

The time to act to protect Oregon from factory farms is now. New factory farms are increasingly targeting our state at a time when we are aggressively trying to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to stop the worst impacts from climate change. Allowing new and expanding factory farms into our state stands counter to Oregon's position as a climate leader. A moratorium on new and expanding factory farms would protect Oregon's vulnerable water resources from polluted manure runoff and the unsustainable extraction of large quantities of already scarce water from Oregon's rivers, streams and groundwater aquifers. A moratorium will also help alleviate the disproportionate environmental health impacts of industrial animal agriculture on communities of color, Tribes, and low-income communities in rural Eastern Oregon.

Over the past year we have seen the acute and systemic harms caused by factory farms throughout the state. The Lower Umatilla Basin, home to the largest operating and proposed mega-dairies in Oregon, suffers from depleted and degraded groundwater with widespread nitrate contamination. Morrow County recently started testing residential wells and found pervasive high levels of nitrates in residents' drinking water. The County declared a local state of emergency in June 2022 to help it address the crisis and provide safe drinking water to residents.<sup>1</sup> In addition, in spite of Lost Valley Farm racking up hundreds of violations of its water quality

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<sup>1</sup> Monica Samayoa, *Morrow County declares emergency over high nitrate levels in wells*, OPB (June 10, 2022), <https://www.opb.org/article/2022/06/10/morrow-county-state-of-emergency-drinking-water-contamination-nitrate-levels/#:~:text=Morrow%20County%20declared%20a%20local,action%20to%20protect%20drinking%20water>. See also Stand Up to Factory Farms Statement, <https://standuptofactoryfarms.org/2022/06/13/morrow-county-commission-declares-state-of-emergency-over-nitrate-contamination-in-groundwater/>.

permit before it was closed in 2019, and continuing nitrate contamination in groundwater beneath the site, DEQ and ODA are considering approving another 30,000 head mega-dairy at the exact same site. Without legislative action, more proposed factory farms threaten to exacerbate this pollution.

Air pollution from factory farms is also harming Oregonians. Factory farm emissions include ammonia and hydrogen sulfide, which are serious respiratory system irritants as well as greenhouse gasses methane, carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide. The 11 mega-dairy facilities operating in the state produce over 17 million kilograms of planet-warming methane every year. When operating with just over 50,000 cows in 2005 (now at 70,000), the Threemile Canyon Farms mega-dairy reported the highest ammonia emissions in the nation among industrial sources. Yet despite long standing stakeholder recommendations and overwhelming support from impacted citizens, the Environmental Quality Commission recently refused to begin regulating this dangerous air pollution from mega-dairies. These failures demonstrate that issues with factory farms are not due to a few “bad actors,” but instead show that our regulations are not sufficient to protect Oregon’s resources from these industrial facilities.

Oregon is now seeing an influx of new factory farms seeking to move into the state, and is clearly ill-prepared to protect our environment and communities from the increased pollution they will bring. For example, the Willamette Valley is a target for the expansion of Foster Farms mega-chicken facilities. Although local communities have rallied in opposition to these operations, the deck is stacked in favor of allowing new factory farms despite their known harms. The factory farm moratorium is essential to prevent these large corporations and others from moving into Oregon and protect the vibrant regional agriculture and rural communities that Oregon values. Forty years ago, Oregon was home to more than 4,000 dairies, mostly small, family-owned businesses. As factory dairy farms have come to dominate state milk production, just over 200 remain. Factory farms now threaten to do the same thing in the chicken business.

Chicken factory farms are not the only type of factory farm that are affecting Oregon. The expansion of factory farms is wreaking havoc on Oregon. A moratorium will give legislators and regulators an overdue opportunity to evaluate the public health, economic, animal welfare, and environmental impacts of factory farms while providing Oregon’s most impacted communities with relief from further harm.

We urge Oregon Senators and Representatives to support SB 85-1 and keep the bill strong for a moratorium on new and expanded factory farms in Oregon.

Sincerely,

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