



Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
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HB 2469 TESTIMONY

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
AND NATURAL RESOURCES
REPRESENTATIVE BRIAN CLEM, CHAIR

March 16, 2017

Presented by
CHAD ALLEN, PRESIDENT
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association

My name is Chad Allen. I currently serve as the President for the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association headquartered here in Salem, representing 228 Oregon Dairies statewide. These multi generational farm families deliver the highest quality milk to the market everyday **under strict state and federal regulations**. I am a dairy farmer from Tillamook County where I reside and farm with my family.

In 2015, the milk produced on Oregon's dairy farms resulted in an economic contribution of more than \$474 million dollars (farm gate value before processing). The number of Oregon Dairies is directly related to the ability of each farm to withstand milk market price fluctuation against the cost of feed, labor, taxes, equipment and the ever changing regulatory burden from the state and federal levels.

It is imperative any new legislation passed this Session take into consideration the consequences to Oregon's Dairy Farmers and their ability to remain in business in Oregon.

HB 2469 as written creates a patchwork of 36 different county regulations and over 400 city regulations on agricultural crops if they are genetically engineered (GE). Currently,

Oregon law ensures that all growers in Oregon operate on a level playing field, regardless of what county they live in. It is very common for farmers and foresters to have land in multiple counties, and oftentimes a single field can straddle county boundaries.

For the Oregon Dairy Farmer, they depend upon the crops they can grow on farm or purchase from a nearby farm for their feed rations. These crops include GE crops like corn and canola. To create a framework where counties could restrict the production of these crops may very well mean a dairy farmer could not feed the same rations to their herds. This could potentially have a devastating effect on how the milk that is shipped away from their farm would taste to the consumer and whether or not the processors would have to change their process when converting the fluid milk to cheese, yogurt, butter, and other milk based products enjoyed by consumers at the market of their choosing.

Of course, the financial burden to the Dairy Producer who may have to grow or purchase more expensive seed or nearby feed, could be the final blow to our industry.

Oregon was once home to somewhere around 1,000 dairy farms with local processors in every neighborhood. Today, the remaining 228 dairy farms have very limited options for the delivery of their milk with a very few processors. If a new producer wants to come into the dairy sector, they must first secure a contract with a processor who will pick up their milk. It is for this reason the dairy industry does NOT see a great deal of growth and expansion. For the record, the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association has spoken favorably about the permit application for the new facility in Boardman. It is also important for this Committee to know that every dairy no matter the size is our member and we will fiercely work to protect and preserve every dairy in Oregon.

As a producer, I can attest that every new regulation, whether it is State or Federal, comes with a price. That price is our time, first and foremost. Many of us are struggling desperately to locate, hire and retain a reliable and dependable workforce. When we lack workers on our farms, we have to be everything to the farm. That means early morning and late afternoon shifts in the milking parlor, chores to keep the herd healthy, paperwork, interface with our processors for milk pickup, planting and harvesting the crops, discussions with our veterinarian (who we share with other farmers), caring for our families and our workers.

Dairy demands that my work week is 24/7, 365 days a year. The limited time I am away from my farm directly correlates to if and whether I have reliable help on the farm. No other profession makes this type of demand on its practitioners. Thus, we are seeing family members declining accepting the obligations that come with saying “Yes” to joining the management team and acquiring the farm. The next generation is seeking a “work, life balance” not unlike other college graduates. If this session the Legislature wants to help Oregon’s Dairy Farmers, we would support your investment in additional research funds for Oregon State University and also making low interest loans available for the acquisition of technology so we can equip our milking parlors and barns with robotic technology.

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association respectfully urges the Committee to oppose HB 2469.

Thank you for your time and attention.