



March 15, 2023

Chair Golden and members of the Senate Natural Resources committee,

The Stand Up to Factory Farms coalition appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 85-1, which would enact a moratorium on the very largest new and expanding factory farms.

The Stand Up to Factory Farms coalition represents 28 local, state and national organizations focused on a variety of issues affecting Oregonians, ranging from maintaining Oregon's vibrant family-scale farms and rural communities and building a more just and equitable food system, to protecting Oregon's air, water, and climate, and improving animal welfare. Collectively, our groups represent 355,000 Oregonians. We are deeply concerned about the impacts factory farms have on Oregon's air, water, climate, rural communities, small farmers, workers, public health, and animal welfare. A moratorium on new and expanded factory farms as proposed in SB 85-1 would allow Oregon time to put policies in place that address the industry's many harmful impacts.

Factory farms are not simply larger farms. They are industrial facilities using industrial practices, and generating industrial-scale pollution. Oregon's one-size-fits-all approach to regulation tilts the scales in favor of these operations, with weak or nonexistent regulations that can strain a family farm while serving as just a cost of doing business to the largest facilities. We need stronger and more equitable regulations that focus on holding the factory farm industry accountable. But to get there, we need a pause, a moratorium, on the permitting of the largest new and expanding operations.

Since the Threemile Canyon mega-dairy, one of the largest in the country, was constructed in the late 1990's, the number of independent dairy farms in Oregon has plummeted. In the eight years after its construction, 600 small dairy farms went out of business. While the industry has concentrated dairy cows in fewer and fewer mega-dairies. With that concentration comes a massive amount of waste—6.5 billion pounds in 2019 alone, more than twice the amount of human waste produced in the Portland-metro area.

All that waste has to go somewhere. The current practice is to spread it on fields, often in quantities far exceeding crops' ability to absorb the huge amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus.

The excess leaches into the groundwater where it poisons nearby drinking water wells, and runs off into our streams and rivers.

We also cannot ignore the fact that the harms caused by factory farms do not fall equally on all Oregonians. These facilities disproportionately impact Black, Brown and Indigenous Oregonians. The communities near the state's biggest factory farms are primarily home to Latinx residents burdened with contaminated well water and poisoned air. Our communities should not suffer these kinds of harm for private profit.

The State of Oregon already knows the clear and present danger that factory farms pose. The permitting, pollution, and subsequent closure of the Lost Valley mega-dairy was not an isolated incident. Rather, it is symptomatic of the greater problem: Oregon's weak regulations and practice of rubber-stamping factory farm permits makes it entirely too easy for these disasters to occur. The Lost Valley mega-dairy debacle cost Oregon taxpayers at least \$326,000. These funds were spent enforcing the bare minimum of environmental compliance and then, once it was clear that Lost Valley Farm needed to cease operations, in shutting the facility down.

Lost Valley was a warning -- if we continue to permit these facilities, it will be the tax-paying citizens of Oregon who are left holding the bag. Instead of heeding this warning, the ODA and DEQ are still considering approving the Easterday dairy at the exact same site. DEQ and ODA suggested they couldn't say "no" to Easterday's Oregon mega-dairy application, despite the existing groundwater contamination in the area and the legal and financial issues surrounding the Easterdays, which have clear bearing on the company's ability to run a compliant facility. The agencies still have not denied the Easterday permit, showing our regulations are clearly insufficient to protect our water and rural communities.

The risk of more factory farms in Oregon is significant, as we are now seeing mega-chicken facilities try to move into the state. As legislators consider SB 85-1, there are three proposed mega-chicken facilities being proposed for the state. Two of these would be Foster Farms facilities which would continue to increase consolidation and drive local farmers out of business. One of these facilities is located ½ mile from a rural school, further demonstrating the harms these facilities can cause to rural communities.

We are at a crossroads in Oregon agriculture. We urgently need a moratorium on factory farms so the state can enact policies to protect our air, water, climate, family farms, and special places. We cannot let Oregon become the next hotspot for factory farms.

Our coalition envisions an Oregon with a vibrant network of independent farms, thriving rural communities, healthy rivers and streams, and clean air. A moratorium on factory farms would help us get there. On behalf of the Stand Up to Factory Farms coalition, and our 355,000 members and supporters across Oregon, I urge you to stop the spread of these dangerous factory farms and give regulators the opportunity to strengthen protections from their harmful impacts by enacting a factory farm moratorium for Oregon.

Respectfully,

Lilli DiPaola  
Organizer  
Stand Up to Factory Farms