



TESTIMONY

Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee

March 9, 2017

Vote NO on Needless Regulation of Oregon's Dairies

On behalf of our 7,000 farming and ranching member families, the Oregon Farm Bureau Federation (OFB) respectfully asks the Committee to oppose SB 197, which would impose unnecessary and costly new air emissions regulations on Oregon's family dairies.

Oregon's dairy farmers are some of the most forward thinking in the nation and have long worked to ensure they are good stewards in their communities. SB 197 would require the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to undertake rulemaking to develop a program to regulate dairy air emissions. Emissions from dairies are not an air quality issue in this state, and regulation of these family farmers is not necessary.

Small family dairies are targeted under this bill. SB 197 targets dairies of all sizes in Oregon, including the smallest family operations. The legislation seeks to implement the recommendations of the 2008 Dairy Air Task Force, which included the study of and potential regulation of all Oregon dairies.

The vast majority of dairies that would be regulated under the proposed program would be small-and medium-sized, family operations. This is because CAFO water quality permits in Oregon are not triggered by the size of the operations. Rather, the permit exists to ensure that there are no impacts to water quality from operations that handle manure—the permit has nothing to do with the size of the farm. Indeed, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) is currently in the process of reviewing a CAFO permit for a dairy that would milk four cows, and the smallest permitted operation in the state only has 50 head of cattle.

Dairies are not causing significant air pollution in Oregon. Oregon dairies are not causing air quality issues in Oregon. State monitoring consistently shows that the vast majority of Oregon has outstanding air quality year-round. In areas where there are isolated air quality issues, they are primarily due to woodstove smoke and urban emissions, not animal agriculture.

It is important to note that much has been discovered about the low risk from Oregon dairies since 2008. For example, a study of dairy employees' air quality during an average workday found that none of the dairy's employees were exposed to any impacts that

exceeded human health standards. Dairies are safe to work on and are safe for their communities.

Oregon's dairy farmers are doing their part to protect the environment. Oregon's dairy farmers are ahead of the national curve. They were pioneers in voluntarily coming under the CAFO water quality program in the late 1970s and have continued to build on their record of environmental stewardship since then. For example, dairy farmers in Tillamook have worked with the conservation community on several salmon habitat restoration projects, and most have voluntarily adopted advanced protections to minimize risk of water or air quality impacts from their property. These efforts are in addition to the stringent measures required under the CAFO water quality permits.

Importantly, many of the same elements that dairies are implementing to protect water quality also protect the air quality around the dairy and ensure that emissions from dairies are not a health risk. Oregon's dairymen and women are doing their best to protect the environment, from the smallest dairies to the largest.

DEQ policy and funding priorities should not be set by anti-dairy groups. DEQ's budget and policy priorities should be based on what achieves the best results for all Oregonians, not by groups that oppose Oregon dairies. In the eight years since the Dairy Air Task Force provided its recommendations, DEQ has rightfully focused its resources on urban air quality, water quality and environmental cleanup. Given that emissions from dairies are not a significant source of human health risk in Oregon, OFB believes that DEQ correctly allocated its money and time to other priorities. SB 197 would force DEQ to devote time and resources to rulemaking on a very low-priority issue during a difficult budget session.

The Task Force did not require any action. In its report the 2008 Task Force made note of significant uncertainties in the science around potential emissions from dairies. Since that time, there has been considerable research into air quality from dairies. And this research has concluded that the contribution of dairies to air quality is much lower than early studies suggested. During that same time period, Oregon dairy farmers have continued to build upon their record of strong stewardship, adopting technologies such as digesters, which help ensure that air in Oregon remains among the cleanest in the nation. Today, it is clear that action to further regulate dairies is not necessary.

Oregon's family run dairies are operating in a way that is protective of human health and the environment, and OFB respectfully urges the Committee to vote 'no' on SB 197. The bill unnecessarily directs DEQ to take up an issue of low priority that would burden all of Oregon's dairies.

Please contact Mary Anne Nash at maryanne@oregonfb.org with any questions.