Western Organic Producers
Dairy Alliance

Bar M Ranch • Bordessa Family Dairy, Oceanbreeze Dairy • Gillian's Dairy California Cloverleaf Farms • Ferreira Dairy • JLT Ranch • McClelland Family Dairy • Robert McClelland Dairy and R & J McClelland Dairy • Sweet Grass Organics, Inc. • Walt Stornetta Ranch and Del Mar Dairy

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The Honorable Kevin de León
Senate President pro Tem
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Assembly Speaker
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 94249

The Honorable Mark Leno
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5100
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 94249

The Honorable Lois Wolk
Chair, Senate Budget Subcomm. No. 2
State Capitol, Room 5114
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard Bloom
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcomm. No. 3
State Capitol, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 94249

April 20, 2016

Re: Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund 2016-17 budget: Support $5 million in non-digester dairy strategies to reduce methane emissions

Honorable Senate Pro Tem de León, Speaker Rendon, Budget Chairs Leno and Ting, and Budget Subcommittee Chairs Wolk and Bloom,

On behalf of the undersigned dairy producers and processors, we write to urge your support of pasture-based and 'dry' manure management strategies, in addition to digesters, to reduce methane emissions in the dairy industry. No one strategy to address methane emissions will work on all of California's dairies. Our dairy operations are highly diverse in terms of size and management structures, requiring that the state pursue a diversified strategy to achieve the desired methane reductions and allow for small and mid-scale dairy operations to continue to thrive.

Both the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) have acknowledged the need for a diversified approach to

tackling dairy methane emissions. Despite this, the Administration's GGRF budget proposal would only fund dairy digester incentives and research. **Therefore, of the proposed $35 million in GGRF funds for dairy methane reduction strategies, we request that at least $5 million be dedicated to non-digester dairy methane reduction strategies including, but not limited to, pasture-based dairying, dry scrape, composting, and solid separation strategies.**

A digester-only investment approach would unnecessarily restrict the methane reduction opportunities available to the industry. While digesters may be a good fit for some operations, many dairies in California will be unable to capitalize, adequately maintain, and efficiently operate these technologies. Despite the investment of many millions of dollars in subsidies, only a tiny fraction of dairies in the state have successfully deployed digesters so far. Land and resource constraints, as well as economic and technical considerations, will continue to make other methane-reducing manure management strategies a more feasible and cost-effective option for many operations.

The number of dairies operating in California declined from 2,165 in 2007 to just 1,438 by the end of 2015. Despite consolidation into larger operations, the number of cows per dairy varies widely across the state, from an average herd size of 237 in Humboldt County to an average of 3,266 in Kern. Meanwhile, the number of California dairy cows managed under organic practices – which require at least four months of pasturing each year – rose from just under 10,000 cows in 2001 to nearly 51,000 cows in 2014. In addition, demand for organic dairy products continues to rise.

As described above, CARB, in its draft Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Strategy and CDFA in its FY16-17 Budget Change Proposal, have acknowledged the benefits of non-digester strategies to reduce dairy methane emissions. These non-digester strategies should include:

- 'Dry' manure management strategies that avoid, lessen, or convert away from the use of liquid lagoons, including dry scrape systems, composting and solid separation technologies. These strategies show considerable promise to greatly reduce methane emissions and avoid some of the thorny water contamination issues associated with liquid-based 'flush' systems.
- Pasture-based dairy systems can increase soil carbon sequestration through the natural decomposition of manure in fields, and can avoid the anaerobic conditions that generate methane in liquid-based systems. Organically certified dairies, which are required to pasture their cows for four months of the year, have shown that pasturing practices can be economically viable in certain regions of California. There is great potential for pilot and demonstration projects to pioneer methane-reducing pasture-based practices within a wider portion of the industry. Conventional confined dairy operations can achieve multiple benefits by becoming more 'mixed', i.e. integrating selective pasturing practices into their existing management.

Thank you for considering this request. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Gary Bordessa
Bordessa Family Dairy, Oceanbreeze Dairy

Ward and Rose Marie Burroughs
California Cloverleaf Farms

Cindy Daley
Sweet Grass Organics, Inc.

Louis Ferreira
Ferreira Dairy

Melissa Hughes, Legal Counsel and Director of Government Relations
Organic Valley

Britt Lundgren, Director of Organic and Sustainable Agriculture
Stonyfield

Garry Mahrt
Gillian's Dairy

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Richard H. Mathews, Executive Director
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George McClelland
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Robert and Jolynn McClelland
Robert McClelland Dairy and R & J McClelland Dairy

Jim and Luci Mendoza
JLT Ranch

Lance Stornetta
Walt Stornetta Ranch, Del Mar Dairy

Albert Straus
Straus Family Creamery