



# Dairy Cares Report

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## Tulare County takes an important step toward streamlined dairy permitting

As January came to a close, the nation's most important dairy county took a critical step toward securing a strong future for its dairy industry. The Tulare County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously Jan. 26 to initiate a General Plan Amendment process to revise the county's land use policies and regulations for dairies.

This important move is critical to the future of the county's dairy industry. County leaders have long been proactive about making sure their policies allow for dairies that are both environmentally and economically sustainable. Nearly a decade ago, Tulare County was one of the first in California to adopt a land use plan for dairies, including what were then some of the most comprehensive environmental rules for dairies in existence. Although the regulations amounted to a new burden for dairy producers, Tulare County leaders had helped make operating conditions more predictable for dairy businesses, while reducing exposure to a growing wave of lawsuits against dairies and county governments at that time.

But years passed and times changed. Since the county adopted its landmark ordinance for dairies, sweeping changes have occurred in the state's environmental regulations. The San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District adopted comprehensive rules for dust control at dairies in 2004 and followed with even more stringent rules for other air emissions from dairies in 2006. Passage of Assembly Bill 32, The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, set the stage for additional environmental review of all new or expanding projects, including dairies. Meanwhile, the Regional Water Quality Control Board imposed the nation's strictest water quality regulations for dairies in May 2007.

With other government agencies stepping in – in a big way – Tulare County now realizes many of its regulations are duplicative, outdated or in need of revision. This realization is good for the county and the dairies. The county already has limited resources and has been forced to take severe budget cuts in the past year. Engaging in regulatory work already handled by other governmental agencies that specialize in air and water quality issues is simply unneeded and a waste of precious resources. Furthermore, a streamlined county program should result in reduced fees for dairy operators – who don't need to pay

two different government agencies two separate fees to inspect the same aspects of the same facility.

Revising the Tulare County General Plan dairy section will be a slow and thorough public process and could take many months. However, when the process is complete, the county should be able to process permits more quickly while eliminating a lot of wasteful fees and duplicative regulation. This will benefit the local economy by removing unnecessary red tape during future periods when market indicators suggest that dairies grow or otherwise improve their operations. It will also help the local economy and employment by removing unnecessary barriers from business development.

County leaders should be applauded for seizing this opportunity to prepare for a better future. But equal credit is due to Tulare County dairy families. Working closely with Dairy Cares, local dairies provided 100 percent of the funding necessary to allow the county government to hire technical experts needed to conduct the work required for revising the General Plan. What's more, this unprecedented effort took place during one of the worst economic downturns in the California dairy industry's history.

Working closely with county leaders and Tulare County dairy producers, Dairy Cares will continue to assist with this effort as it proceeds, even as we continue our programs in many other areas. Efforts like these will help ensure that millions of Californians can continue to enjoy the jobs, economic stimulus, nutritious products and food security benefits of a healthy dairy industry.

*Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care and treatment within the California dairy industry. Our members include the Alliance of Western Milk Producers, Bank of the West, Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, Hilmar Cheese Co., HP Hood, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O'Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairymen, and others. For information about Dairy Cares, visit our web site at [www.dairycares.com](http://www.dairycares.com), or call 916-441-3318.*