

May 27, 2024

TO: Interested Parties

FR: Jonathan Brown

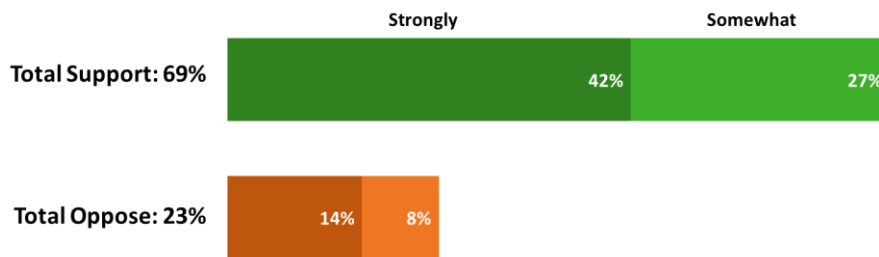
RE: Statewide and San Joaquin Valley Voter Research

Polling demonstrates that current climate incentives to California’s dairy farmers are strongly, broadly supported.

According to our recent survey of registered voters statewide and in the San Joaquin Valley, we find strong support for the incentives currently provided by the State to California’s dairy farmers for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and producing renewable natural gas.

As shown in Figure 1 below, the current incentive program is supported by 69% of voters statewide with 42% of voters “strongly” in support. Only 23% oppose the incentives.

Figure 1 – Statewide support for/opposition to climate incentives for CA dairy farms

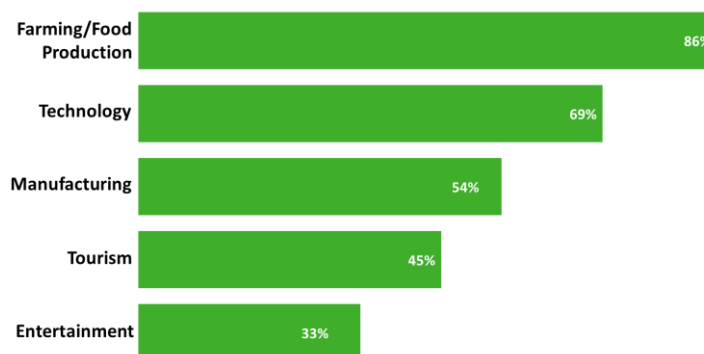


Support is strongest among Democrats, with 80% in support of the dairy farm incentives. Just under three-fourths (73%) of No Party Preference/3rd Party registrants also support the incentives.

These findings are in line with general support for State incentives to businesses to offset the costs of following laws and regulations related to climate change, which are supported by 67% of voters statewide.

Importantly, voters recognize farming and food production as essential to the state’s economy. An overwhelming 86% describe the industry as “very important” to the California economy; far greater than other industries as shown in Figure 2 below.

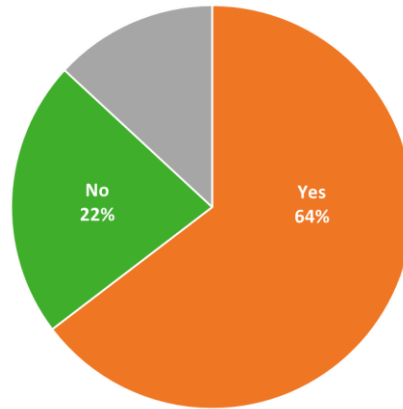
Figure 2 – Industries rated as “very important” to the California economy



If these climate incentives to California dairy farms were to end, 64% of voters believe their food prices would increase, as shown in Figure 3 below. This is especially significant because 68% of voters describe the cost of food as either a crisis (30%) or a very serious problem (38%) – second only to their concern about the cost of housing – and half of voters are pessimistic about their personal financial situations over the next year.

Concern about the cost of food is even higher among voters in the San Joaquin Valley with 77% describing it as a crisis or very serious problem. Voters in this area are also more pessimistic about their personal financial situations. Latino voters statewide are also more concerned about food prices and more pessimistic about their personal finances.

Figure 3 – Would the elimination of dairy incentives raise your food costs or impact you in another way?



More than three-fourths (76%) of women under the age of 45 believe that the elimination of these incentives would have a negative impact on them – the highest of any demographic subgroup.

In addition to San Joaquin Valley voters’ higher-than-average levels of concern about their personal finances, they are also more troubled by the loss of 1000 dairy farms over the last 20 years. More than seven-in-ten (71%) San Joaquin Valley voters describe that loss as “very bad” thing, compared to 59% of voters statewide.

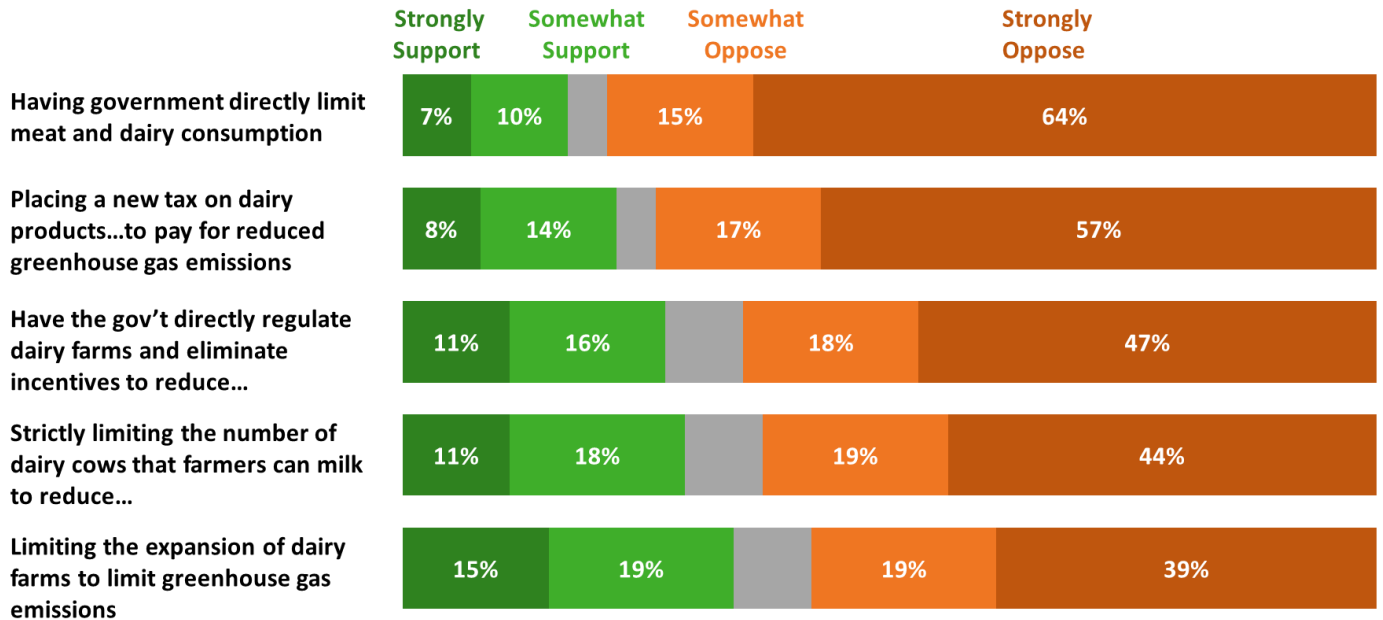
By a very wide margin, most voters find the climate incentives to California dairy farms to be a “win-win” with economic and environmental benefits. As shown in Table 1 below, few voters agree with the criticism that the use of the renewable natural gas created by the conversion of dairy waste is a bad thing for the environment.

Table 1 – Forced choice on environmental impact of climate incentives for CA dairy farms

	Statewide	SJV
These climate incentives to dairy farms to produce renewable natural gas are good for California. We get reduced greenhouse gas emissions from both farming and from vehicles that no longer use petroleum products.	63%	59%
These climate incentives to dairy farms to produce renewable natural gas are bad for California. Promoting renewable natural gas moves us further away from the real solutions for climate change, which are electric and hydrogen powered vehicles	17%	18%

The preference for the status quo with regard to dairy farming and specifically these incentives among California voters is clear and unmistakable. Two-thirds of voters (65%) statewide and three-fourths (72%) in the San Joaquin Valley oppose having the state directly regulate dairy farms and eliminate the current incentives. Even more voters (74% statewide/80% SJV) oppose placing a new tax on dairy products to pay for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from California dairy farms. Other potential regulations on California dairy farms and on dairy consumers meet with strong and broad opposition as shown in figure 4 on the following page, including limiting meat and dairy consumption (79% opposed), limiting the number of cows that can be milked (63%) and limiting dairy farm expansion (58%).

Figure 4 – Voter support/opposition towards potential regulations on CA dairy farms and consumers



These incentives are a rare instance of a state policy that addresses issues of high concern in ways that make immediate sense to a strong majority of voters. Lawmakers and regulators should be congratulated for their effective approach.

-end-

METHODOLOGY: Between May 2-6, 2024 Sextant Strategies & Research conducted a multimodal (live telephone and internet) survey among 1200 California registered voters including an oversample of 400 interviews in the San Joaquin Valley. Calls were made to both cell phones and land lines and Spanish-language interviews were conducted among respondents who preferred to take the poll in that language. The estimation error for the statewide results is 3.4%, and 4.6% for the San Joaquin Valley results, both at the 95% confidence level.