Funding provided by CALIFORNIA DAIRY RESEARCH FOUNDATION
Our Programs, Your Breakthroughs®

Dairy Cares Newsletter

April 2016

www.DairyCares.com

State Air Board Methane Plan Unrealistic

Date: April 2016

A recently revised Air Resources Board Climate Pollutant (SLCP) Reduction Strategy sets highly unrealistic mandates for dairy methane reduction. The SLCP strategy is part of the state's broader effort to reduce gas emissions. The plan contains targets for dairy methane reduction including a "75 percent reduction of dairy manure methane from 2013 levels by 2030," and a "25 percent reduction in enteric emissions by 2030." The major change in the revised plan is a proposal to begin "regulating" dairies as early as 2017.

While the proposed strategy recognizes the significant efforts the state's dairies have already made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is seeking huge additional reductions and, thereby, setting the industry up for failure. California dairies have been recognized by prominent researchers as having among the lowest carbon "hoofprints" per unit of milk produced, which is the standard measure of methane emission from dairy cows.

While California dairy families remain committed to further reductions, ARB's 2030 mandate of a 75 percent reduction in dairy manure methane emissions is ill-conceived and unachievable, and could have unintended consequences. ARB has not identified a clear plan on how to effectively achieve the targets that could easily require $2 to $3 billion of investment. The SLCP strategy acknowledges this concern noting, if "regulations impose costs on the [dairy] industry that cannot be recouped, a result could be emissions leakage, if some dairies relocate outside of California" and emit the same, and perhaps even more, emissions than they did in California. The 75 percent target is not based on a realistic analysis of what is achievable, but rather an arbitrary political goal of reducing total methane emissions in the state by 40 percent by 2030.

While ARB's plan acknowledges the need for a minimum of $500 million in incentive funding over the next five years, that funding has so far not been committed. Data from the California Department of Finance and Legislative Analyst's office confirm that the return on investment per metric-ton reduction of CO_2e (carbon dioxide equivalent) from dairy digesters is better than all but two of the projects the state has funded from its

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF). Moreover, these reports show digester project expenditures provide significant benefits to disadvantaged communities.

Funding dairy methane reduction projects is almost indisputably the best investment the state can make when return on investment, disadvantaged community benefits and clean-air “co-benefits” are considered. So why is the state failing to make the investment?

The California dairy industry is committed to being an active partner in state efforts to address climate-change challenges. That commitment is part of the longstanding dedication to dairy farm sustainability and productivity ingrained in the California dairy tradition. California dairies are already a model for the rest of the world on how to reduce methane emissions. California’s family dairies look forward to continuing to work with ARB to develop a workable strategy that identifies realistic and achievable goals and provides the necessary funding for additional reductions. Only then will the state and dairy industry be successful.

Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care. Our members include Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Cattlemen’s Association, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, GHD Services, Inc., Harris Construction, Hilmar Cheese Co., HP Hood, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O’Lakes, Merck Animal Health, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairymen, Yosemite Farm Credit and others. For information, visit our web site or call 916-441-3318.