



# COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION  
DRIVE, ROOM 102A  
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

## SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 11/8/2022

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** County Administrator's Office

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Marissa Montenegro 707-565-2431

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisorial District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Organic Dairy Crisis - Letter of Support

**Recommended Action:**

Authorize the Chair to sign letter of support of financial aid for Western United States Organic Dairies due to historic drought conditions and unsustainable feed costs.

**Executive Summary:**

The continued drought in California and the Western US and the associated rise in animal feed costs is putting many organic dairies at risk of going out of business. Targeted assistance from the government in the form of emergency funding, dairies are at risk of going out of business which will impact the local food system and rural communities. If this issue persists, increased food shortages could emerge in our communities.

This item seeks Board approval for the Chair to sign a letter of support on this issue. Staff will develop this issue to be included in the 2023-2024 Legislative Platform which will be presented to your Board in December 2022.

**Discussion:**

Feed, electricity, fuel, and other costs are through the roof with inflation and the ongoing drought. Local dairy farms are being severely impacted financially and as a consequence, a significant portion of the organic dairy farming community and organic farmland will likely be permanently lost and much of that farmland will go fallow and lose economic value. Dairy farms, feed supply farms, and dairy processors are significant employers of farm and skilled labor and the loss of these employers represents hundreds or thousands of lost jobs in an increasingly likely worst-case scenario. Local impacts will include food supply shortages of organic dairy products in grocery stores and significant increases in shelf prices for organic dairy products.

The effects of the megadrought on the supply of feed and skyrocketing inflationary economic pressure has the organic dairy industry facing collapse. Agriculture is facing the brunt of these collective pressures without an efficient safety net or adaptive funding mechanisms to reduce on-farm operating costs such as irrigation pumping and electricity. Current safety net funding mechanisms through federal programs have application processes that are onerous and do not cover the cost of adopting and implementing the more climate resilient infrastructure. In addition to the need for immediate financial assistance, infrastructure funding for implementation of climate resiliency and energy independence is also needed to offset the impacts of drought and inflation.

This item seeks Board approval for the Chair to sign a letter of support on this issue. This issue will also be further developed to be included in the 2023-2024 Legislative Platform which will be presented to your Board in December 2022.

**Strategic Plan:**

N/A

**Prior Board Actions:**

N/A

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

N/A

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

Letter of Support

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

N/A