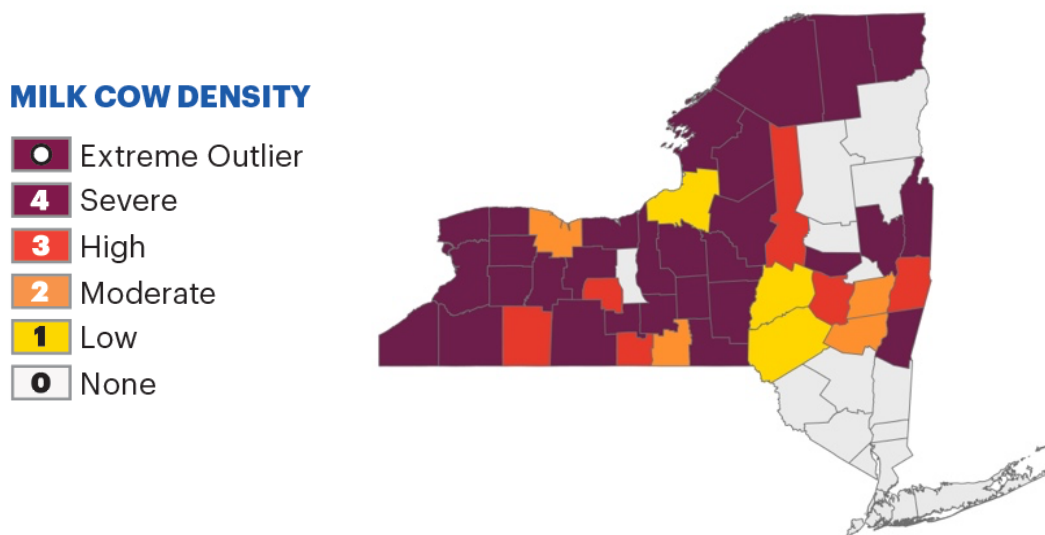


Factory Farm Nation: New York's Mega-Dairy Problem

New York's factory farms are raising more animals than ever before, producing unprecedented amounts of manure waste. This manure is typically not treated before being dumped into the environment, where it fouls rivers and streams, pollutes drinking water, and fuels climate change.

Meanwhile, state and federal policies and incentives continue to prop up Big Ag's factory farm model at the expense of family-scale operations, which are collapsing in alarming numbers. New York must ban new factory farms and the expansion of existing ones, and revamp farm policies to build a food system that works for everyone.

Milk Cows on New York's Mega-Dairies



Source: Food & Water Watch analysis of U.S. Department of Agriculture

New York's Mega-Dairies Harm the Environment and Rural Communities

In 2022, New York had 425,018 milk cows living on mega-dairies,¹ a 21 percent increase in just five years. Altogether, these factory farms produce 17.5 billion pounds of manure each year. This is equivalent to the human sewage produced by 12.9 million people — or two-thirds of the state's population. It is enough manure to fill 11.5 Olympic-sized swimming pools *each day*.

Untreated manure is often spread on farmland, and surplus manure can create runoff that pollutes soil and water.² Moreover, mega-dairies often store manure in liquid lagoons, which can release significant amounts of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.³ Factory farms release additional hazardous pollutants like ammonia and nitrogen oxides that worsen air quality for nearby residents. Mega-dairies and other factory farms have long been disproportionately located in low-income and non-white areas, creating an environmental justice crisis.⁴ In addition to these health hazards, residents near factory farms report foul odors and flies that keep them from enjoying the outdoors or even opening their windows.⁵

New York Is Bleeding Family-Scale Dairies

Nowhere is the shift from family-scale to factory operations more apparent than in the dairy industry, where consolidation occurred at a faster pace than in almost every other agricultural sector.⁶ Smaller, family-scale farms are struggling to survive. New York reported roughly one-third as many family-scale dairies in 2022 compared to 2002. The number fell by 1,900 (43.5 percent) from 2017 to 2022 alone. This harms rural communities, with the rise in factory farms linked to a host of social and economic declines, from higher poverty rates to out-migration.⁷

We Can Fix Our Factory Farm Problem

We need a complete overhaul of our federal farm policies so that they work for farmers and consumers — not agribusiness giants — while reducing livestock's climate footprint. This must include:

- An immediate, national ban on new factory farms and on the expansion of existing ones;
- Research and funding to help current factory farms transition to smaller, more sustainable crop and/or livestock systems; and
- Investment to expand local markets and build the infrastructure needed to help farmers bring their products to market.

While we work toward these goals, New York must take immediate action by enacting a moratorium on new and expanding factory farms, and stopping the expansion of industry scams like factory farm gas, ethanol, and carbon pipelines that only further entrench the factory farm model.

Endnotes

- 1 For methodology, see Food & Water Watch (FWW), "Factory Farm Nation: 2024 Edition." September 2024.
- 2 Graham, Jay P. and Keeve E. Nachman. "Managing waste from confined animal feeding operations in the United States: The need for sanitary reform." *Journal of Water and Health*. Vol. 8, No. 4. December 2010 at 649 to 651 and 654; Yang, Qichun et al. "Spatiotemporal patterns of livestock manure nutrient production in the conterminous United States from 1930 to 2012." *Science of the Total Environment*. October 2015 at 14 to 20.
- 3 See FWW. "Factory Farms, Fracking, and the Methane Emergency." July 2024.
- 4 Katz, Jamie et al. "Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability, Central Valley Defenders for Clean Water & Air, Animal Legal Defense Fund, and Food & Water Watch Comments on Proposed Amendments to the Low Carbon Fuel Standard." Submitted to the California Air Resources Board. February 20, 2023 at 2 to 4. Available at https://www.arb.ca.gov/lispub/comm/iframe_bccomdisp.php?listname=lcfs2024&comment_num=7060&virt_num=
- 5 *Ibid.* at 7; Weida, William J. The Colorado College. "A synopsis of potential impacts from dairies on a regional economy." March 2003 at 1 to 2; Border 2012 Texas-New Mexico-Chihuahua Regional Work Group Public Meeting. Minutes. Anthony, New Mexico. November 4, 2010 at 2 to 3.
- 6 MacDonald, James M. et al. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. "Consolidation in U.S. Dairy Farming." Economic Research Report No. 274. July 2020 at 11.
- 7 Lobao, Linda and Curtis W. Stofferahn. "The community effects of industrialized farming: Social science research and challenges to corporate farming laws." *Agriculture and Human Values*. Vol. 25, Iss. 2. June 2008 at 220 to 221 and 225; Durrenberger, E. Paul and Kendall M. Thu. "The expansion of large scale hog farming in Iowa: The applicability of Goldschmidt's findings fifty years later." *Human Organization*. Vol. 55, No. 4. Winter 1996 at 411 to 412; Lyson, Thomas A. and Rick Welsh. "Agricultural industrialization, anticorporate farming laws, and rural community welfare." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*. Vol. 37, Iss. 8. August 1, 2005 at 1487 to 1488.