

# FALSE PROMISES and HIDDEN IMPACTS of DAIRY DIGESTERS

## The Basics

Dairy digesters are facilities that create biogas, also known as biomethane, from wet manure from large, confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). The gas is then injected into pipelines or, possibly, used as transportation fuel. Biomethane is not clean; burning manure-produced gas emits the same air contaminants as the combustion of fossil fuel, and releases other harmful pollutants into the air and water that are unique to factory farms.

## False Promises

**Dairy digesters are the only option to deal with the methane released from wet manure in dairy operations.**

**REALITY:** Dry manure management techniques and other alternative practices can prevent the creation of methane.

**Dairy digesters are addressing the full scope of greenhouse gas emissions from dairies.**

**REALITY:** Dairy digesters do nothing to address enteric (intestinal) methane emissions from cows, or other GHG emissions from dairies.

**Dairy digesters are accessible to small dairies, and helping them thrive..**

**REALITY:** Only large dairies can provide enough manure to make adopting digester technology worthwhile, allowing big dairy to only get bigger.

## Who's Paying the Price?

**Community and environmental impacts:** CAFOs produce serious environmental impacts, particularly in nearby communities, by contaminating groundwater, emitting air contaminants beyond methane, attracting heavy-duty truck traffic and producing odors. These pollution, public health, and social equity effects fall especially on disadvantaged rural communities.

**Unintended consequences:** Increased funding for dairy digesters is likely to exacerbate these problems by incentivizing even larger dairy operations, and in effect, bigger herd sizes and higher concentrations of cows that produce more harmful methane.

**Manure Pit, or Money Pit?:** Despite hundreds of millions of dollars in grant funds to support digester development and operations, dairy digester proponents themselves note the need for continued grants and rate-payer subsidies to sustain the industry.

### Whose cash cow?

Only two digester developers (California Bioenergy & Maas Energy Works) have received 100% of the <\$110 million from CDFA's digester program in 2017 & 2018. Plus, Maas and CalBio received 95.5% of \$319 million from the CPUC for six digester cluster projects. CalBio gets another \$26.5 million in loans for digesters from the Aliso Canyon Settlement.