

Testimony of

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To the

United States House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture; Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture

At the hearing, on

Sustainability in the Livestock Sector: Environmental Gain and Economic Viability

Thursday, February 3, 2022

Good Morning subcommittee Chairman Costa, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you about my family's farms and how we strive to be the best stewards of our land. I am Rosie Burroughs of Burroughs Family Farms. My husband Ward and I have always felt a strong responsibility for taking care of the land and passing it down to the next generation in better condition than we inherited it. For our forefathers, my husband and I, and our children, we are proud to have continued the stewardship of our farms over the course of five generations.

With my husband Ward, we farm with 3 of our children and their families, in the rolling foothills of the San Joaquin Valley of California in Northeastern Merced County and Bonanza, Oregon. We are carrying on the Burroughs family farming legacy which spans over a century. Over the last 20 years we have formed partnerships with our children in ~ Full Circle Dairy, Burroughs Family Orchards and California Cloverleaf Farms

We are committed to Organic/Regenerative family farming practices and to promoting the preservation of quality farmland in a way that nourishes and regenerates the land & enhances the soil, air, water and the overall environment.

We have integrated regenerative farming practices into our farms including cover crops & management intensive grazing livestock in our minimum/no till orchards that enhance our interrelated holistic systems to reduce water use and improve soil fertility by focusing on nourishing soil biology and increasing biodiversity. We rely on no synthetic inputs of any kind, and maintain a sustainable loop of resources.

Hedgerows of more than 60 varieties of native plants, trees and shrubs, have been planted to provide habitat for pollinators and other beneficials across all farms. We have something in bloom every day of the year.

Burroughs Family Farms is the marketing flagship for Organic/Regenerative, grass-based, pasture-raised added value products produced by the family enterprises including almonds, beef, chickens, dairy, eggs, sheep, olive oil, walnuts, meat birds, & turkeys.

Farming/Ranching organically using Regenerative Practices and management intensive grazing is the key to the future. To do this, we are using the practices to build soil health: minimum or no-till the soil, cover the soil with a diversity of plants for as long as possible, use as many plant species as possible, integrate livestock grazing when possible. We use compost and manure for our fertility.

Ecdysis Foundation and Cal State East Bay have conducted research on our farm over the last 3 years. The research on our orchards has shown that we have improved organic matter, increased water holding capacity and infiltrations rates, significantly increased our carbon sequestration, increased our insect biomass, increased soil microbial activity, used less water and our yields are improving.

On December 31, 2020, we milked for the last time, at our California Cloverleaf Farms Dairy. California Cloverleaf Farms Dairy was closed because it was no longer financially viable. We have always followed the National Organic Program (NOP) rules but could not survive doing it. The organic dairy industry doesn't have a level playing field because the NOP has not enforced the pasture rule uniformly across the nation. Congress has directed the NOP to publish the final rule on Origin of Livestock, which NOP has NOT done. Having the NOP make the origin of livestock final rule will ensure all dairy farms are operating under the same rules.

Our other family organic dairy, Full Circle Dairy, is headed down the same road.... because the pay price is too low and the costs are too high to be economically viable. There is too much supply of cheap organic milk which lowers the pay price because the NOP has not done its job. This creates an unfair advantage for those operating under the intent of the National Organic Program and the intent of the organic rules. The following information is a short summary of our work and Congress's directive to issue the final rule in 2020 and has still not been addressed. In 2008, dairy producers across the country worked together to establish meaningful and enforceable standards for dairy cows and their progeny to be on productive grassland. Congressional Support required USDA to issue a final rule by including the following language in both the House and Senate passed Agriculture Appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2020:

“No later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall issue a final rule based on the proposed rule entitled “National Organic Program; Origin of Livestock, “ published in the Federal Register on April 28, 2015 (80 Fed. Reg. 23455); Provided that the final rule shall incorporate public comments submitted in response to the proposed rule.”

We are losing or have lost the very pioneers of the organic dairy movement. We've lost those who were models of pasture-based organic dairy production, working with the land, environment, and Mother Nature to provide the organic milk consumers were looking for. The organic dairy industry was built on the backs of producers following the true INTENT of organic rules. To reduce organic dairy production to just numbers, minimum guidelines, and methodologies takes away from those working to keep integrity in the organic seal.

Despite these challenges and building on our successes outside of organic dairy, during this past year of 2021 we have started our transition out of each business partnership and will complete our succession to the next generation and to our grandchildren in 2022.

We believe that our greatest legacy is passing down the farm, the most precious of natural resources, to future generations, in better condition than when we inherited the land.

Our Nation's greatest resource is the family Rancher/Farmer who are the stewards of our farmlands and grasslands and are devoted to producing our country's food and fiber!

Investors from China are purchasing farm land with water in Merced County. We were told by one realtor that when s/he asked "why are you interested in purchasing farm land"? The person replied we are preparing for the future to ensure we have food to send to our people of China. Our Country needs to have the same priority about food, farming, ranching and the land that sustains our lives. How can we let food grown on our farm land be exported to feed other countries?

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and share my experiences about our family's farms. I hope and pray that you will take this information in this hearing to support by ensuring the sustainability of livestock systems so that more Farmers and Ranchers can get the support they need to become more resilient and do our part to produce food and fiber as climate change creates extreme weather challenges.

We are hosting a farm field day on February 17, 2022, we offer our farm to educate farmers and our community about the practices we are using. Please join us.

<https://noregretsinitiative.activehosted.com/index.php?action=social&chash=e3796ae838835da0b6f6ea37bcf8bcb7.4596&s=10f642e253f53f2b312c0217a0ddcf73>

www.burroughsfamilyfarms.com ~ <https://www.facebook.com/BurroughsFamilyFarms>

Ecdysis Foundation

<https://f1000research.com/articles/10-115>

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsufs.2021.664359/full>
<https://peerj.com/articles/4428/>
www.ecdysis.bio

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