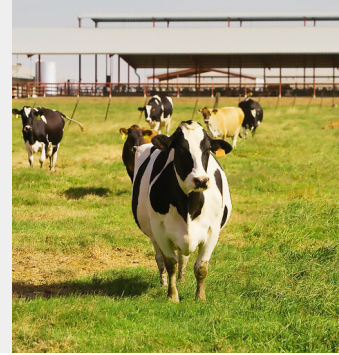


# Converting Our Waste Sustainably (COWS) Act

Establishes a new manure management conservation program at the USDA, which will provide financial and technical assistance to the dairy and livestock industry.



## What is the COWS Act?

The Converting Our Waste Sustainably (COWS) Act (H.R. 4327 and S. 2479) would establish a new manure management conservation program at the USDA, which will provide financial and technical assistance to the dairy and livestock industry. The COWS Act will help achieve three goals:



Increased profitability



Improved water quality



Reduced GHG emissions

## Methane Reduction Benefits

Moving from wet manure handling and storage to dry manure handling and storage can significantly reduce methane emissions associated with anaerobic manure lagoons - by more than 90 percent in some instances.<sup>1</sup> Anaerobic manure lagoons have more than 10 times the global warming potential of solid manure piles.<sup>2</sup> The less time dairy and livestock manure is in anaerobic conditions (wet without oxygen), the greater the potential for methane emission reductions.

## Water Quality Benefits

Composting manure offers water quality benefits, including the following:

- Nitrogen in finished compost is much more stable and is less likely to leave the soil and enter surface and groundwater as compared to applying uncomposted manure.
- The pathogen kill achieved through the composting process enables the manure nutrients to be used in growing human consumed crops. As a result, the nutrients can be utilized by more crops on more acreage.
- Composting manure enables easier transport - enabling the nutrients to be spread further distances.<sup>3</sup>

## ENDORSED BY A DIVERSE GROUP OF SUPPORTERS:



For a complete list, please see the [COWS Act website](#).

<sup>1</sup> According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, "The amount of manure stored in water and, therefore in anaerobic conditions, is significantly less and methane emissions can be dramatically reduced - perhaps by more than 90 percent - when dry systems are used (Owen and Silver, 2015). See page 13: [https://www.cdffa.ca.gov/oefi/climate/docs/SLCP\\_Recommendations.pdf](https://www.cdffa.ca.gov/oefi/climate/docs/SLCP_Recommendations.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Greenhouse gas, water, and land footprint per unit of production of the California dairy industry over 50 years. See: J. Dairy Sci. 103:3760-3773 <https://doi.org/10.3168/jds.2019-16576>

<sup>3</sup> See page 16: <https://suscon.org/pdfs/compostreport.pdf>

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## Practices Eligible for Assistance

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### Pasture-based management

- Converting a non-pasture operation to pasture-based management
- Increasing time spent on pasture at an existing pasture-based operation
- Improving pasture-based management by adopting management-intensive rotational grazing

### Alternative manure treatment and storage practices

- Installing a compost-bedded pack barn
- Installing a slatted floor pit storage manure collection system
- Installing other similar treatment and storage practices

### Solid separation systems

Installing a new solid separation system with significantly higher efficiency than the existing system, including developing or retrofitting a manure management system to avoid wet handling infrastructure, in conjunction with one or more of the following:

- Open or enclosed solar drying or composting of manure on-site
- Forced evaporation
- Manure storage in unconfined piles or stacks
- Enclosed composting with forced aeration and continuous mixing
- Composting in piles with forced aeration, intensive windrows with regular turning, or passive windrows
- Scrape technologies, including vacuum technologies, in conjunction with one or more of the composting practices named above

## Suitable for Small & Mid-Scale Operations Nationwide

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By supporting a diversity of practices, under the proposed program, producers can tailor their alternative manure management practices to best meet the needs of their operations, regardless of scale or geography.

## How To Support the COWS Act

Please see the [COWS Act website](https://calclimateag.org/currentcampaigns/cows-act) (<https://calclimateag.org/currentcampaigns/cows-act>) for more information on how you can support the inclusion of the COWS Act in the next farm bill.

## Sponsors of the COWS Act

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Representatives Jim Costa (CA-21), David Valadao (CA-22), and Chellie Pingree (ME-1) are the original cosponsors of H.R. 4327. Senators Alex Padilla (CA), Sherrod Brown (OH), and Martin Heinrich (NM) are the original cosponsors of S. 2479. For a complete list of cosponsors, please visit [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).