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Padilla Introduces COWS Act to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, U.S. Senator Alex Padilla (D-Calif.), member of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) introduced the *Converting Our Waste Sustainably Act* (COWS Act) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable alternative and pasture-based management practices. The House version of the bill was introduced by Representatives Jim Costa (D-Calif.-21), David Valadao (R-Calif.-22), and Chellie Pingree (D-Maine-01).

As the top dairy state in the country and the second in cheese production, California is the largest producer of milk, butter, and cheeses like Mozzarella, Monterey Jack, and Queso Fresco. Dairy operations contribute billions to California's economy but are also responsible for 60 percent of California's methane emissions. Recognizing the urgency of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions like methane, California and the dairy industry are on track to reduce dairy methane emissions by 40% by 2030.

The *COWS Act* establishes a new manure management conservation program, modeled after California's extremely successful Alternative Manure Management Program, that will provide more resources for our livestock industry to help achieve three goals: (1) modernize technologies for manure management that help boost profitability; (2) improve water

quality; and (3) reduce methane and nitrogen oxide emissions by fostering climate-smart farming. The legislation also directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture to prioritize awards for underserved communities.

“California’s farmers and farmworkers put food on the table for families across the country, but the climate crisis demands we adopt a more sustainable agricultural model. This legislation invests in long-term and low-cost pasture-based management practices that will support our family dairies and protect our environment, improving the quality of the air we breathe,” **said Senator Padilla.** “As we work to transition to a greener economy, we must equip our producers with the critical resources and tools they need to transition to sustainable practices, and keep California’s cows happy.”

“Dairy farmers are critical to our efforts to address the climate crisis,” **said Scott Faber, Senior Vice President for the Environmental Working Group.** “The COWS Act will make proven, climate-smart practices a bigger priority for USDA. We applaud efforts to help our farmers reduce greenhouse emissions by investing in climate-smart practices. Our farmers are already seeing the effects of climate change firsthand and are eager to be a big part of the climate solution.”

“Sustainable manure management is a critical conservation priority for dairy farmers as the industry works to achieve its voluntary, producer-led goal of becoming greenhouse gas neutral or better by 2050. However, conservation programs continue to be oversubscribed, preventing dairy from making its greatest possible contribution to the nation’s greenhouse gas reduction. We thank Reps. Jim Costa, D-CA, David Valadao, R-CA, and Chellie Pingree, D-ME and Sens. Alex Padilla, D-CA, and Sherrod Brown, D-OH, for introducing the bipartisan, bicameral COWS Act which will elevate the emphasis on a variety of manure management systems important to dairy’s stewardship priorities,” **said Paul Bleiberg, Senior Vice President of Government Relations at the National Milk Producers Federation.**

“The COWS Act will provide crucial nutrient management resources to dairy farmers, who are currently struggling because milk prices fall well below their production costs. Passage of the COWS Act will enable dairy farmers to adopt practical climate-smart nutrient management methods

that improve air and water quality and achieve their environmental sustainability goals,” **said Lynne McBride, Executive Director at the California Dairy Campaign.**

This legislation is based on California’s Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP), which was established in 2017 to support non-digester manure management practices on dairy and livestock operations that will result in reduced emissions of methane and are less expensive to construct and operate.

Senator Padilla has long worked to address the increased challenges that producers face as a direct result of the climate crisis so that our agricultural industry remains strong and sustainable. Padilla recently [introduced legislation](#)

[\(https://www.padilla.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/padilla-introduces-legislation-to-facilitate-voluntary-agricultural-land-repurposing-to-bolster-water-supply/\)](https://www.padilla.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/padilla-introduces-legislation-to-facilitate-voluntary-agricultural-land-repurposing-to-bolster-water-supply/), to build drought resiliency and

reduce water use by providing federal funding to states and tribes that work to voluntarily repurpose agricultural lands. Padilla also introduced the *Plant Biostimulant Act*

[\(https://www.padilla.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/padilla-braun-introduce-bipartisan-bill-to-research-standardize-rules-for-plant-biostimulants/\)](https://www.padilla.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/padilla-braun-introduce-bipartisan-bill-to-research-standardize-rules-for-plant-biostimulants/), to invest in alternatives to synthetic pesticides and

fertilizers and support research on the technology’s benefits for soil health. Last year, Padilla [joined a bipartisan letter](#)

[\(https://www.padilla.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/padilla-western-senators-urge-usda-to-prioritize-drought-and-conservation-efforts%ef%bf%bc/\)](https://www.padilla.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/padilla-western-senators-urge-usda-to-prioritize-drought-and-conservation-efforts%ef%bf%bc/), urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture to support

the efforts of Western farmers and ranchers to improve water infrastructure and efficiency, reduce erosion, and provide technical assistance for growers in regions affected by drought.

This legislation is endorsed by California Dairies, Environmental Working Group, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and the National Milk Producers Federation.

The full text of the bill is available [here](#)

[\(https://www.padilla.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/RYA23B32-1.pdf\)](https://www.padilla.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/RYA23B32-1.pdf).

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