

AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR NATIONAL MORATORIUM ON NEW AND EXPANDING CONCENTRATED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS

ACTION 10: ELIMINATING WASTE-MANAGEMENT SUBSIDIES CAFOS RECEIVE UNDER EQIP

In light of the wide-ranging negative health and environmental impacts associated with Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), as well as serious social and environmental justice concerns, the American Public Health Association adopted a new policy resolution. The [Precautionary Moratorium on New and Expanding CAFOs](#) calls for federal, state and local governments, including public health agencies, to impose a national moratorium on new and expanding CAFOs until additional scientific data on the attendant risks to public health have been collected, uncertainties resolved, and 12 action steps outlined in the resolution have been taken. This document is one of a series of briefs concerning the action steps that must be met before the APHA's call for a moratorium will be lifted. This document focuses on Action Step 10, and provides additional information pertinent to this action step.

Action Step 10 requires:

The federal government eliminates waste-management subsidies CAFOs receive under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

Overview of EQIP reporting requirements: EQIP is a voluntary conservation incentive program that helps farmers and ranchers adopt conservation practices on working agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land through financial and technical assistance. The program is administered by the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and provides up to 75 percent of the cost of a conservation project (and up to 90 percent for socially-disadvantaged, beginning, and veteran farmers and for certain water quality practices) which includes structural, vegetative, and management practices. EQIP payments can be made for income forgone as well as costs incurred in almost any stage of project design and implementation.

Overview of the waste-management subsidies under EQIP: At the federal level, 50 percent of total EQIP funding is set aside for livestock operations without limits to funding directed to CAFO-style farming operations. In some states, NRCS reserves a share of EQIP funds for CAFO projects even though other conservation projects provide more environmental benefits. According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, in fiscal year 2016, 11 percent (\$113 million) of EQIP funds were allocated toward CAFO operations, and top supported practices included waste storage facilities (\$51,634,622); waste facility covers (\$33,582,510); animal mortality facilities (\$8,867,865); and manure transfer (\$7,779,326).¹ Because such a large percentage of funding supports CAFO-style production, smaller operations that use innovative, alternative sustainable management practices such as rotational grazing receive less support.

RECOMMENDED POLICY CHANGES

USDA should consider shifting EQIP evaluation guidelines to reward creativity and efficacy, and should prioritize support for small and mid-sized producers who have the least capacity to afford conservation investments. NRCS should eliminate the use of EQIP funds to support waste storage and related facilities

for new or expanding CAFOs, should prioritize funding for sustainable management practices (such as rotational grazing practices), and promote the inclusion of grazing practices in the livestock set-aside.

The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future is an interdisciplinary academic center based within the Bloomberg School of Public Health's Department of Environmental Health and Engineering and is a leader in public health research, education, policy and advocacy that is dedicated to building a healthier, more equitable and resilient food system. The opinions expressed herein are our own and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Johns Hopkins University.

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REFERENCES

1. Johnson C. Cover Crops and CAFOs: An Analysis of 2016 EQIP Spending. National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. <https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/eqip-fy2016-analysis/>. Published January 12, 2017. Accessed April 2, 2020.