

For Immediate Release

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Sustainable Agriculture, Local Food & Environmental Groups Oppose Measure J

Sebastopol, CA — Today, an alliance of Sonoma County-based organic and sustainable agriculture, local food systems, and environmental stewardship organizations and businesses announced their opposition to Measure J.

Sonoma County voters will have the chance to cast their vote on Measure J in November. If passed, it would reduce the number of dairy and poultry livestock operations in the County by placing caps on how many animals can be raised on each farm. Our larger family farms would be banned, and the economic fallout is likely to be significant for smaller farms and ranches, agriculture feed and equipment companies, and local food.

“Sonoma County is home to some of California’s best agricultural stewards whose farms provide numerous climate and environmental benefits such as storing carbon in soil, limiting energy-intensive urban sprawl, and providing wildlife habitat and open space to recharge groundwater,” said Renata Brillinger, Executive Director of the Sebastopol-based organization California Climate and Agriculture Network. “We are united in our commitment to protecting our local, organic family farms.”

“If this measure passes, individuals, restaurants, and school cafeterias won’t stop buying poultry and dairy products. And they shouldn’t. These are important parts of many people’s diets,” said Wendy Krupnick, President, Sonoma County chapter of Community Alliance with Family Farms (CAFF). “They should have this choice as well as the choice to buy local, quality products from family-owned farms rather than imports from corporations outside Sonoma County.”

“This misconceived initiative creates too many questions about how to enforce it, who will be impacted, and what it will cost to implement,” said Olivia Rathbone, Communications Director with the Occidental Arts & Ecology Center. “Yes, there are many ways that water quality, labor protections, and animal welfare can always be improved, but this measure isn’t the way to accomplish that. Measure J will cause more harm than good.”

“The Latino PAC of Sonoma County opposes Measure J because it threatens the livelihoods of the farmworkers who are most often permanent, year-round residents as workers in key sectors including dairy and poultry farms, and without whom our quality of life would be changed forever,” said Caroline Banuelos, on behalf of the Latino PAC of Sonoma County.

“Due to Measure J’s negative economic impact on farmers and farming, large tracts of grazing land and open space may be lost to urban sprawl,” said Matt Calloway, Political Director, Sonoma County Conservation Action. “This will undermine Sonoma County’s commitment to fight climate change, retain its water recharge areas and wildfire buffers.”

For more information and a complete list of opponents to Measure J, please see this website:
<https://www.sonomafoodnoonj.org/>

Additional statements from opponents:

“Over the last 30 years we have built a sustainable and organic food system in our community. The generational family farms that exist at the heart of our farming system have always been at the center of this sustainable transformation. Today, our regional food community provides high quality food for local residents and organic consumers around the country while also serving as a global example of on-farm environmental stewardship and climate positive practices. Measure J threatens to completely undercut our decades of transformational work.”

— Albert Straus, Straus Family Creamery

“This measure will do nothing to prevent those obscenely large indoor operations being built in the Midwest and Southwest with 20,000 to 100,000 or more cows under one roof. Those cows belong on the land like we have here in Sonoma County. Keep our local family-based farms strong. Vote measure J down.”

— George Davis, Porter Creek Vineyards (founding partner), President of the California Farmers Union

“Vote no on Measure J. If this passes, no more Liberty Duck, Straus or Clover. It affects our local eggs, milk, cheese, beef and poultry. Its real goal is to end animal agriculture here all together. In fact, it would leave us with only access to CAFO meat and dairy from elsewhere. It would change the face of Sonoma County ag. We would lose what I love about cooking here. Know the face that feeds you.”

— Duskie Estes, Black Pig Meat Company, chef, farmer, rancher

“I have the privilege of working with many local dairy farms and get to see first-hand the care they take in managing their land and caring for their animals. Measure J is a misguided attack on high quality, humane dairy farms, in the guise of promoting animal welfare, and will have a huge negative impact on Sonoma County.”

— Michael Benedetti, Senior Director of Sustainability, Regulatory, & Quality, Clover Sonoma

“Livestock provide untold services in managing the landscape without the use of fossil fuels. Without them our fire risk would skyrocket as it is uneconomic to reduce fuels such as thatch and brush mechanically over the vast tracts of Sonoma County landscape. Livestock farming systems, while always in need of refinement and improvement, represent a holistic, value producing, rather than depleting, and sustainable system that should definitely be preserved... and celebrated.”

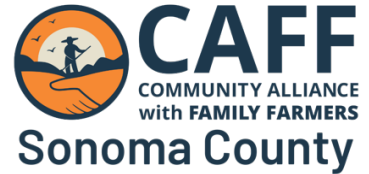
— Willow Summer, Three Springs Community Farm

“Crippling the capacity of Sonoma County farmers to produce high quality, pasture-based protein will shift this production to megafarms outside our region, aggravating all of the environmental and animal welfare issues measure J proponents claim they wish to eliminate, while undermining the economic viability of local ag-supporting and ag-dependent businesses and infrastructure. Sonoma County agriculture today stands as a global example of a steadily improving local food production model necessary to address the environmental and climate challenges of our time. Save Sonoma County’s agriculture: vote NO on Measure J.”

— Torri Estrada, Executive Director, Carbon Cycle Institute

“I have spent 30 years fighting for a healthy, humane and just food system and the family farms that bring so much to Sonoma County's communities and environment. Measure J is a sledge hammer that will harm the ranchers, dairies, and farmers who help define our culture and cuisine. Everyone who actually knows and understands our county's agriculture is against Measure J.”

— Michael Dimock, Roots of Change



Carbon Cycle Institute

