

## Flooding the Market

### How Dairy Consolidation is Drowning Minnesota's Farmers & Rural Communities

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## Executive Summary

Minnesota is facing a generational crisis in agriculture as dairy farmers are pushed out of the industry at an alarming rate even as production continues to rise. Extreme consolidation, driven in part by the rapid expansion of mega-dairies like Riverview LLP, is distorting dairy markets, limiting opportunity for independent farmers and undermining rural economies. We are at a critical moment here in Minnesota when it comes to the future of family dairy farming. Riverview's latest proposal, which would create the largest livestock operation in Minnesota, would further concentrate dairy production at a time when farmers are already struggling to survive. In short, the so-called "West River Dairy Expansion" in Stevens County would be a game changer for independent farmers, rural communities, the land, and our water. As state regulators consider Riverview's unprecedented proposal, it's clear this convergence of rapid consolidation, economic distress, and large-scale expansion raises urgent questions about whether existing policies are adequately protecting fair competition, rural communities, and public resources.

❑ Minnesota has lost nearly 75% of its dairy farms over the past two decades. Farmers are not failing due to inefficiency or lack of output, but because they lack access to fair and reliable markets, and are increasingly pushed out of the supply chain by large-scale industrial producers like Riverview LLP.

❑ The 14 largest dairies in Minnesota are all owned by Riverview, signaling an extraordinary level of concentration. Riverview's latest proposal to create the largest livestock operation in the state will further increase its stranglehold on the milk business.

❑ As production consolidates among fewer, larger operations, smaller farmers face growing barriers to securing or maintaining contracts, raising concerns about fair access to markets. The current market conditions are not working for independent farmers, and it raises urgent questions about how increasing consolidation is limiting competition, restricting market access, and accelerating the loss of family-scale dairies.

*This moment presents an urgent need to examine whether current market conditions are fair, competitive, and sustainable for farmers and communities.*

❑ Replacing dozens of independent small and medium-sized farms with a single large operation concentrates economic activity and reduces the broader economic benefits that come from having more farmers on the land and in our communities.

❑ Ensuring fair markets, protecting public resources, and supporting the next generation of farmers will require public policy changes to address the structural challenges driving consolidation in the dairy industry. Government entities such as the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency must ensure any proposed expansions of mega-dairies are governed by a system that provides a full understanding of the impacts they will have on other dairy farmers, the environment, and the dairy market. In the short-term, that means ordering an environmental impact statement (EIS) be completed for the unprecedented West River Dairy Expansion in Stevens County.