The "Dairy Capital of the World" sues its neighbor — Corcoran, Kings County

Corcoran calls itself the Dairy Capital of the World. In 2015, its city council voted to sue one of its own dairies — Curtimade Dairy, a hundred-year neighbor — alleging the dairy's operations had contaminated the city's drinking-water wells with nitrates. The suit grew from an $8–9 million claim to a $65 million lawsuit, and as of the last public reporting we could confirm, it still hadn't been resolved.

$65M

Size of the City of Corcoran's lawsuit against Curtimade Dairy by August 2019 — up from an initial $8–9 million claim.

$500K

Cost Curtimade's owner said a year-long, 14-well investigation ordered by the court in 2021 would require.

What happened

Corcoran's city council voted in June 2015 to pursue legal action against Curtimade Dairy, alleging that nitrate contamination in the city's drinking-water wells — tied to 2015 drought conditions — came from the dairy's operations. Nitrates can interfere with red blood cells' ability to carry oxygen; the health risk is sharpest for infants. The claim started as a notice of intent to sue for $8–9 million and had grown to a $65 million lawsuit by August 2019 — filed in Tulare County Superior Court (where Curtimade Dairy is sited, even though Corcoran itself is in Kings County), brought by Visalia's Farley Law Firm on the city's behalf, on four causes of action: nuisance, trespass, negligence, and unfair business practices. Curtimade disputes responsibility, saying it has always met state nitrate standards and that Corcoran hasn't shown direct evidence connecting the dairy to the 2015 contamination spike specifically. By a February 2021 hearing, Corcoran's own attorneys said they weren't ready for trial and needed roughly another year to gather data; the judge gave the city six months and let its experts run the same tests state regulators can perform, with Curtimade's owner estimating the investigation — 14 new wells — would cost over $500,000. The city manager who led the lawsuit effort, Kindon Meik, had by then left for a job in Calabasas. No settlement, trial, or verdict has been reported in the sources we could find.

Impact — what we know, and what we don't

- **Outcome:** Unresolved as of the most recent coverage located (March 2021). This project does not know, and should not imply, how the case concluded. One unverified lead from this pass: a Hanford Sentinel piece headlined "Corcoran settling Curti lawsuit" exists, but the article itself is paywalled and we could not confirm whether "settling" meant a reached settlement or an ongoing settlement process — not treated as resolving this open question.
- **Whether nitrates in Corcoran's water actually came from Curtimade:** Disputed by the parties, and not independently adjudicated in any source we reviewed.
- **Corcoran's population and water-system-wide nitrate exposure:** Not captured in the sources reviewed for this specific case; the city's "Dairy Capital of the World" identity and thousands of acres of surrounding farmland are documented, but a population or exposure figure is not.

Part of a larger pattern

Corcoran is the one case in this county-level pass that isn't a story about an under-resourced small utility — it's a municipality using litigation against a named agricultural operator as its own remedy, the same tool this project tracks as a "court case" lane alongside the regional **1,2,3-TCP litigation against Shell and Dow** that Tulare County's Earlimart used to fund a well fix. It sits next to **Stratford's** infrastructure-failure story and **Kettleman City's** legacy-contamination story as the third, distinct kind of Kings County water case this project has documented.

Sources

- **ABC30, "City of Corcoran sues well-known dairy company for $65 million"** (republished by the Water Education Foundation's Aquafornia).
- **Valley Voice, "Corcoran drags out lawsuit against Curtimade Dairy"** (March 4, 2021).
- **Valley Voice, "Local Ag Warns Corcoran – Suit Against Curtimade Dairy Will Have Statewide Consequences"** (Jan. 29, 2020).

Full citation detail and source archive: **Data**. Back to **water insecurity in the Central Valley**.