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Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) are degrading Minnesota's air and water, while disproportionately harming rural and low-income communities through chronic public health impacts such as respiratory illness, contaminated drinking water, and reduced quality of life. These operations externalize their true costs onto the public, while the ecological damage continues to compound year after year.

Minnesota has an opportunity and responsibility to move in a different direction. Restoring native prairies and oak savannahs would rebuild soil health, protect waterways, sequester carbon, and provide critical habitat for pollinators that our food system depends on. These ecosystems once defined the region and can again serve as a foundation for sustainable land stewardship rather than industrial exploitation.

Meanwhile, the conventional dairy industry has been in structural decline for decades, surviving largely through repeated government bailouts rather than long-term economic viability. Propping up a failing model only delays the transition to more resilient, diversified, and farmer-centered agricultural systems.

If current trends continue—prioritizing short-term production over ecological limits—we risk accelerating soil loss, biodiversity collapse, and climate instability. The long-term consequence is a global food system increasingly vulnerable to failure. Allowing extractive industries to continue degrading land and water is not just environmentally reckless; it is a threat to future food security. Protecting our ecosystems today is inseparable from preventing hunger and catastrophe tomorrow.