

‘Smart’ Masks for Cows? Bill Gates Invests \$4.7 Million in Data-Collecting “Faceware for Livestock”

“This is what you would get when you combine greed and stupidity.”

By [Dr. Suzanne Burdick](#)

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The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation this month awarded a \$4.8 million grant to a company that sells “smart” face masks for cows.

[ZELP](#), which stands for Zero Emissions Livestock Project, claims its artificial intelligence (AI) mask technology for livestock will reduce methane emissions — considered to be a [main greenhouse gas](#) — and curb climate change.

Cows and other ruminant animals emit methane in the process of digesting their food.

The mask goes around the cow’s head and captures the methane gas exhaled by the animal, oxidizing it and then releasing it into the air as carbon dioxide and water vapor, according to ZELP.

It also has sensors that continuously collect millions of data points on the animals that are processed by machine learning algorithms.

“Our AI is trained to detect heat, flag welfare conditions, and identify the most efficient animals with a high-level of accuracy,” [ZELP said](#).

But critics, including third-generation farmer [Howard Vlieger](#), said the Gates-funded venture is illogical and driven by greed.

Vlieger, who advises crop and livestock farmers across the U.S., said, “This is what you would get when you combine greed and stupidity.”

Commenting on the news, [Will Harris](#) — a fourth-generation [regenerative farmer](#) who runs his family’s farm [White Oak Pastures](#), told The Defender all he could say was, “Surely this is a hoax.”

[Critical Sway](#), a researcher and investigator, [tweeted](#), “You couldn’t make this stuff up. ... We’re living in ridiculous times my friends.”

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation just announced a \$4.7 million grant for a company that sells face masks for cows.

You couldn't make this stuff up. pic.twitter.com/U8vkorBKwr

— Critical Sway (@CriticalSway) [March 11, 2023](#)

ZELP — which collaborates with the agricultural giant [Cargill](#) — makes its money by leasing the smart masks out to farmers and by selling [carbon offset credits](#), Critical Sway said.

“History will show that the vast majority of so-called environmentally beneficial projects like this are going to make Bernie Madoff look like an altar boy,” Vlieger said.

Madoff, whose name became [synonymous with financial fraud](#), was behind the \$20 billion Ponzi scheme that CNN called the [largest financial fraud in history](#).

Gates’ love affair with techno-fixes

Smart masks for cows aren’t the first [money-making tech fix](#) Gates has attempted to apply to a natural problem.

Last year, the billionaire partnered with Samsung in an attempt to make a toilet that would [turn human feces into ash](#).

And [Gates recently claimed](#) his [genetically altered seeds](#) were necessary for solving world hunger because climate change alters growing conditions.

He also promotes AI-driven [digital agriculture](#) that relies on large-scale monocultures and is “[basically a surveillance agriculture](#),” according to environmental activist Vandana Shiva, Ph.D.

The technology forces farmers “to get addicted to chemicals and [chemical fertilizers](#)” that harm the planet and people while reducing natural biodiversity, Shiva said.

Shiva said Gates’ solutions ignore obvious natural remedies for environmental problems, such as the regenerative agriculture practices of [managed grazing](#) and natural soil enrichment.

Industrial farming practices — not cows — are the problem

ZELP’s design was one of four winners last year in the [Terra Carta Design Lab](#), an environmental sustainability competition for [cutting methane emissions](#).

Prince Charles — who launched the competition as part of his [Sustainable Markets Initiative](#) — praised the mask design as “fascinating,” [reported Business Insider](#) in April 2022.

But according to Vlieger, ruminant animals in their natural habitat are not the key drivers of environmental problems.



Source: Children's Health Defense

"When the settlers worked their way across the plains, there were [millions of buffalo](#)," Vlieger said. "If ruminant animals were the problem, why didn't we have climate change problems then?"

Techno-fixes like ZELP's smart masks ignore the issue of where and how the animals graze, Vlieger and others said.

Conventional livestock production — which includes confining large numbers of animals in concentrated animal feeding operations, more commonly known as [factory farms](#) — "manipulates pieces of the ecosystem in an effort to maximize production and profits, thereby leading to the complication and expense of dealing with unintended consequences," according to a 2015 report by the [Savory Institute](#), a regenerative agriculture organization that promotes wholistic management of livestock.

An intact ecosystem effectively balances ruminant methane production and breakdown, the report authors said.

Indeed, researchers — including [W. Richard Teague, Ph.D.](#), professor emeritus and [grazing ecologist](#) at Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center — found that with appropriate regenerative crop and grazing management, ruminant animals not only reduce overall [greenhouse gas emissions](#) but also provide essential ecosystem services that increase soil carbon sequestration and reduce environmental damage.

Teague and his colleagues said in a 2016 article published in the [Journal of Soil and Water Conservation](#) that "to ensure long-term sustainability and ecological resilience of agroecosystems, agricultural production should be guided by policies and regenerative management protocols that include ruminant grazing."

Allowing cows to open graze "under appropriate management results in more carbon sequestration than emissions," Teague told [Successful Farming](#).

Grazing systems that are regenerative cause soil microorganisms to increase, which helps drive carbon sequestration and methane oxidization, Teague added.

‘This is wrong in so many ways’

Vlieger said ZELP’s smart mask would generate [electromagnetic radiation](#) that could harm the animals.

“Many years ago when the USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] was talking about the electronic ID ear tags for cattle, I wrote an article about the [dangers of the electromagnetic frequencies](#) — and that was way before we had a fraction of the information that we have today,” he said.

“The potential for [tumors](#) and other [ill health effects](#) are significant,” Vlieger added.

Blogger [Tessa Lena](#) also criticized the cow smart mask because it is a step in normalizing “smart” facewear for both animals and humans — something that is “a win-win for all fascists,” she said in a March 14 [Substack post](#).

Lena said:

“It’s a very lucrative ‘product adoption curve for [Big Tech](#) — and extremely consistent with how they’ve been going about their ‘product adoption curves’ since day one of the industry’s existence.”

Smart faceware is also “useful to the totalitarian types in the government” and a “treasure trove of yummy ‘new oil’ biometric data for the delight of all fascists,” Lena added.

Her solution?

People must wake up and refuse to do this, she said.

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