

George Meyer
GM Meyer Farms

I am in favor of HB 2790.

I'm a third-generation farmer in the Willamette Valley. I have been farming since 1979. We currently farm over 2,000 acres in Marion and Linn Counties. Our crops include perennial rye grass, fescue, hazelnuts, and green beans. The majority of our crops are harvested during the months of July through September.

In November 2017, we had a well-known company come to our local fire station to propose moving their music festival to neighboring farmland. This event would bring 30,000 - 60,000 attendees. We were not blinded by all of the "wonderful things" that this would bring to our community. Instead, we were worried about traffic, fire danger, and most importantly how we would be able to continue farming. She stated that the farmers should just shut down for the 5 days and enjoy the concert. We were shocked! We're already at the mercy of Mother Nature, but now to have this lady tell us we should just put our farming operation on hold for them was mind boggling. That not only affects my bottom line, but it also hurts our employees and their families.

Many outsiders don't realize what goes into farming. We spend all year tending to our fields. We make sure the crops have water, fertilizer, sprayed for invasive weeds, and do our best to eliminate harmful rodents. Our harvest typically begins in early July, but there have been times where we've started in June. We start by moisture testing the grass seed. Once it has reached the optimum number we will cut the field into rows using our Windrowers. After the rows have dried out for about two weeks we bring in our combine crew. This is the most important process of our harvest. The combines are able to filter out the straw and other debris to collect only the seed. The seed is your profit, so you want to be able to collect it all during this step. After the combines have finished we will either bale the remaining straw or we will bring our big 4x4 tractor with a flail to shred the straw to help produce an organic matter for the soil. Then there are fields that will need to be taken out which requires a massive amount of field work.

From this timeline you can see that we can go all the way into October. Being held up in any way could hurt us. If we have to shut down 5 days for a concert, and then we experience a rain storm or high winds we are losing 20% of our profits.

We are just one farming operation. According to Oregon Farm Bureau, there are more than 34,600 farms and ranches in Oregon. Together they occupy over 16.4 million acres! Oregon is number 1 in the nation for producing Peppermint, Fescue grass seed, hazelnuts and black raspberries and nine other crops. Many of these crops are picked at precise times to secure Grade A products.

To have these outdoor mass gatherings on Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) land, it could be detrimental to some of these farming businesses. These laws were put into effect to protect farmland to maintain the maximum amount of agricultural land. I think all counties should require a conditional use application with outdoor mass gatherings of more than 3,000 individuals on EFU ground. This would protect the farmers and EFU zones.

There are already other locations that these big events can be held at. The Moda Center, PIR, Autzen, and Reser Stadiums to name a few are already set up with the infrastructure to handle all of the traffic and accommodate attendees with bathroom facilities, food, and housing nearby.

We need to protect EFU zones, farmers, and the wildlife!
Please vote "YES" on HB 2790!

Thank you,
George Meyer
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