

# Oak Lea Farm

I am a dairy farmer in Marion County. I employ 7 individuals. These are people I work closely with and care about. I do everything I can to compensate my employees fairly and also provide health insurance, bonus, vacation and meat.

I am very concerned about the impact ag overtime would have on my farm and employees.

As a dairy farmer, I cannot increase the sale price of my milk when costs increase. Milk prices are set by federal order and impacted by a global market. Since I cannot pass on increased costs, I will be forced to cap the number of hours that employees work to 40 hours per week to avoid the added expense of overtime pay. The other unintended consequences of this legislation for employees will be that they want to work the extra hours to make more money. As a family business, we can't operate at a loss year-over-year. Mandating overtime after 40-hours demands wages that are not possible with the economics of dairy farming and will result in reduced pay and opportunities for farm employees.

Dairy farms require active engagement every day of the year. Cows must be milked twice a day, animals are fed multiple times a day, they are cleaned and cared for throughout the day every day of the year. We don't take a break in bad weather or for holidays. Healthy, happy cows produce high quality milk and Oregon is a national leader in milk quality. We also manage our pastures and grow feed for our animals. Taking care of the environment is a high priority. This work is labor-intensive, particularly during seasonal periods like planting and harvesting. This bill will likely cost me over \$65,000 in new labor costs that I can't afford.

Farmers have been clear about the consequences of this policy, but I'm also worried that farm employees will see their paychecks reduced or jobs cut if overtime pay is required after 40-hours.

Only seven states have adopted ag overtime policies, and most have crafted policies to ensure some measure of flexibility to ensure that local farms can remain viable, and that employees' jobs and paychecks are protected. Several states have adopted policies to meet seasonal needs and others established higher overtime thresholds that help avoid some of the worst

consequences. Failure to provide flexibility that acknowledges the needs for agricultural production risks the sustainability of thousands of family farms, ranches, and crop production and places farmworkers at a disadvantage, having the opposite effect of what is intended.

As someone who stands to lose their family business, I urge you to oppose HB 4002 as written which would create an inflexible 40-hour overtime mandate that simply won't work for Oregon's farms.

Betty Bielenberg,  
Oak Lea Farm, Aumsville, Oregon