



February 6, 2024

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Re: Support for HB 4060 - \$10.8 million for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

Dear Chair Helm and members of the Committee,

The mission of American Farmland Trust (AFT) is to save the land that sustains us by protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. We urge you to support the \$10.8 million funding request to build on the momentum to protect the heritage and future of agriculture in Oregon.

AFT's Farms Under Threat research shows that, between 2001 and 2016, Oregon lost 65,800 acres to urban and low-density residential development. While the statewide planning system has put Oregon at the top in the nation for farmland protection through land use policy, the state still stands to lose another 109,100 acres by 2040 if these development trends persist. Important farmland is falling through the cracks. OAHP will help protect it.

This funding is an investment that will demonstrate to farmers and ranchers that Oregon remains committed to the future of agriculture. It will support working land conservation easements and covenants, conservation management plans and activities, succession planning education, and technical assistance for support organizations.

With the last round of funding for OAHP in 2022, Oregon was able to leverage \$5 million of state funding to secure an additional \$6.7 million of federal funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement this critical work to preserve our agricultural heritage. In anticipation of more funding for this program, a pipeline for 2024 projects includes 14 potential projects from 6 land trusts in Oregon, which will protect nine ranches, four farms and one orchard for a total of 18,977 acres. **Five of these projects have already secured \$7.2 million in match from NRCS, which will be lost without additional funding for OAHP.** If Oregon leaves this federal funding on the table, it will be reallocated to other states.

Please keep OAHP funded to do this important work and leverage federal resources to support the future of agriculture in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Dani Madrone
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