

Submitter: Julie Hackett
On Behalf Of: Laughing Rabbit Farm
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2979

Dear Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Wildfire:

My name is Julie Hackett. I'm a farmer and owner of Laughing Rabbit Farm in Astoria. We grow an acre of produce, herbs, fruit, nursery plants and seeds. All of our products are sold locally at farmers markets and local businesses.

Growing produce on the coast is already a challenge. High tunnels are not only used for season extension (winter growing) but also required during the growing season for heat loving crops. This will be our 5th season and we have experienced wide swings in temperatures and rainfall, seeing both extremes. These extremes put stress on the crops and leave them vulnerable to pests and diseases.

We received a Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience grant primarily to help manage water, prevent erosion, and improve our soils, which make our crops more resilient to extremes. We installed swales to gently move water away from low spots, prevent erosion, and sink water into perennial crops. We installed a 2500 gallon water tank to catch and hold rainwater for irrigation in our high tunnels. We applied mulch to improve soil and prevent erosion. And we purchased tools to improve our farm composting systems.

This funding has been so valuable because these improvements typically would come out of our operating costs and with the pressures of inflation over the last 2 years, we have an even smaller profit margin. Since we sell our products locally, we can only raise prices so much in a low-income county. It's important to us that our local community can afford to buy high quality and locally grown food. And we also need to secure our farm for future climate extremes.

This funding had a big impact. Farmers and ranchers know what they need to make their operations more sustainable, and smaller operators often don't have access to traditional lending. This fund was flexible enough to be practical for the wide variety of farm operations in Oregon, and it used relatively small dollars to leverage big impacts.

Please support HB 2979 to renew funding for this valuable program.

Thank you,

Julie Hackett
Laughing Rabbit Farm
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