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At the end of the day, legislation like House Bill 2548 reminds us there's no free lunch—or free harvest—in the real world. When lawmakers get starry-eyed about grand new mandates without considering real-life trade-offs, someone always ends up mucking the stalls. Oregon's family farmers are already weighed down by uncertain immigration policies, precarious trade conditions, and tight profit margins. The last thing they need is another stack of regulations that punishes the good guys more than the actual villains.

If Oregon wants to keep its family farms alive and well—and keep grocery prices from spiraling—it needs policy solutions that strike the right balance: tough on cheaters, fair to honest employers, and rooted in the practical realities of farm life. Otherwise, we can all look forward to paying more at the checkout line for whatever flavorless produce Big Ag decides to dish out.

We can't lose sight of the fact that legislation, like any recipe, requires the proper ingredients and a dash of common sense. Pile on the mandates without forethought, and you'll cook up a disaster that nobody wants to swallow.