

## **HB 2063**

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy, and honorable committee members, I'm Michael Dembrow, former senator for SD 23, and until recently the Co-Chair of the Ways and Means subcommittee on Natural Resources. Thank you for scheduling this hearing on HB 2063 and allowing me the opportunity to briefly set the stage for its consideration.

During the interim a number of us (legislators, including the Chair, staff, agency folks, and advocates) had the opportunity to visit OSU's North Willamette Agricultural Research Station in Aurora to see a demonstration of cutting-edge research being done on agrivoltaics under the leadership of OSU Professor Chad Higgins. Agrivoltaics is the simultaneous use of land for both agriculture and solar energy production.

New research by Dr. Higgins and others has suggested that if done right and in the right locations, solar power sited on farmland can be a beneficial, symbiotic use of land for both. We were able to see this in action at the demonstration site, and we were able to hear directly from John Langdon, a Linn County family farmer, about the potential benefits for him, his family, and his community. You'll be hearing from both Dr. Higgins and John in a moment.

While at the research station, we also heard about land-use challenges in siting agrivoltaic operations, which shouldn't be surprising to anyone. No one wants to see good, productive agricultural land taken over by solar farms, as valuable as that resource might be.

I would say that all those in attendance were intrigued by the potential benefits of agrivoltaics, but questions remain. If the key is productive coexistence, requiring the right operations in the right places, how do we make sure that this is the case? How do we make sure that productive land is not lost and that we're able to preserve the health of family farms and provide them with needed income while also meeting our growing need for energy.

In order to get answers to these questions, before leaving the Legislature I asked that a bill be drafted to address potential concerns proactively and clarify the processes for permitting or rejecting proposed agrivoltaics projects. The result is HB 2063, which is before you today.

It creates the Task Force on Agrivoltaics, with support from the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), and broad representation laid out in the bill.

The task force will be examining the following topics, as identified in the bill:

- The existing land use regulations around solar siting and agriculture and variations across the state, if any;
- The benefits of agrivoltaics;
- The potential for agrivoltaics on smaller family farms or community solar projects;
- The impacts to the agricultural economy from agrivoltaics, particularly impacts to properties or property values from solar siting or solar co-location;
- Recommendations on the size of feasible agrivoltaics projects or the proportion of land that may be used for agrivoltaics;
- Mechanisms to ensure that farming remains the primary use of land used for agrivoltaics; and
- Solar development impacts on availability of land for farm use

The task force will meet over the next 18 months and prepare a report for the Legislature in advance of the 2027 session in case any sideboards need to be put into statute.

Chair Lively, Committee members, thanks again for your time and attention. Those who follow me will answer any questions that you may have.

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