

HB 3372 Testimony

Co-chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

My name is Andy Kim, an Oregon native, and community member of Sweet Home, Oregon, where I've lived for 5 years. As someone who deeply values local food security, through small family farms, and sustainable farming, I urge you to support HB 3372 – a commonsense fix to Oregon's contradictory water laws. This legislation represents a thoughtful, pragmatic solution to align Oregon's water policies with our shared values of community resilience and responsible resource management.

Oregon's current water policy incentivizes absurd contradictions: It legally allows 5,000 gallons per day to maintain ecologically sterile lawns, while prohibiting a family from selling sustainably grown squash at a farmers' market – a policy that actively undermines the state's Climate Protection Program goal to reduce emissions by 50% by 2035 & a 90% reduction by 2050.

This isn't just a regulatory oversight – it's a glaring inconsistency in Oregon's climate leadership. While the state rightly critiques carbon-intensive supply chains, our grocery stores remain dependent on produce traveling 1,500+ miles, emitting far more than locally grown food. By restricting small-scale agriculture, we're inadvertently propping up a system where 'local' is reduced to whatever tired greens endure a cross-continental trek – meanwhile, we should start empowering – not penalizing – the very farms who align with those goals.

Why This Matters to Sweet Home & Rural Communities Like Ours

Oregon spends \$5.3 billion annually to import food that our rural communities could grow themselves – a glaring contradiction in a state that claims to value sustainability and local resilience. While bureaucrats obsess over preventing backyard farmers from selling surplus produce, they turn a blind eye to the real costs: carbon-intensive supply chains trucking wilted produce, grocery stores devoid of affordable fresh produce, and the systemic disempowerment of rural families just trying to put nutritious meals on the table.

Many families here rely on small farms and backyard growers for fresh, affordable produce—especially as grocery costs rise and supply chains remain unstable. But the current restriction on selling food grown with domestic wells is hurting our community in ways that go beyond just farming:

1. **Economic Ripple Effects** – Small-scale farming isn't just about food—it's about keeping dollars in our community. When a family sells excess produce at a roadside stand or market, that money stays local, supporting other small businesses. Restricting this trade weakens our rural economy.
2. **Land Use & Farmland Loss** – In Linn County, we're seeing farmland disappear as rising costs and water restrictions push small growers out. If young farmers can't start small and sell what they grow, they'll never afford to scale up—or worse, they'll leave agriculture entirely.
3. **Wasted Food & Lost Connections** – Right now, if a backyard gardener grows too many tomatoes, they can't legally sell the extras. That means food goes to waste while families in our community struggle with food insecurity. HB 3372 would help close that gap.

It's time to realign Oregon's priorities. We cannot prevent to champion food security while criminalizing a family selling homegrown produce as 'water bandits', while turning a blind eye to industrial agriculture's unchecked withdrawals and the absurdity of wasting thousands of gallons on ornamental lawns.

Oregon needs to get its priorities straight – we can't claim to value food security while treating a family selling homegrown berries like some kind of water bandit, especially when massive agricultural operations guzzle ground water unchecked and half acre lawns waste thousands of gallons purely for decoration.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Andy Kim
Sweet Home, Oregon