

Testimony Supporting HB3372

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 Max Edleson and I am a farmer, builder and small business owner in Eugene, OR. I write today to express support for HB3372 which would allow for the commercialization of agricultural products grown using the already exempt ½ acre irrigation allowance for domestic wells.

My testimony focuses on the contributions that small-scale agriculture makes towards the cultural fabric, economic strengths, and physical beauty of our state. These microagricultural businesses contribute significantly to the character of rural residential neighborhoods on the edges of our cities and towns. They are part of what gives Oregon its identity as having a connection with the land. Many of them would continue to suffer the uncertainty of operating illegally and the risk of being shut down unless this bill is passed.

Niche agricultural crops such as Fresh Flowers, U-Pick Blueberries, U-Pick Strawberries, Fresh Produce and Culinary Herbs offer feasible returns on a ½ acre of very efficiently farmed land. These small businesses provide meaningful opportunities for families to manage their land together and pass on from one generation to the next the ways and benefits of working the land and running small businesses that create value and contribute to their community. The local farm or flower stand contributes to the character of rural residential neighborhoods in the transition between urban and rural parts of Oregon.

At the proposed ½ acre limit, a farmer would have to be extremely efficient with all of their resources to make it worth their while. Denser plantings compared to large-scale agriculture means less loss of humidity to evaporation and the use of drip irrigation at this scale allows for the most efficient use of water possible. The opportunity to manage land and water use efficiently is what passing this bill is about.

This bill is not about increasing water use since studies have shown that small-scale drip irrigation can be much more efficient than large-scale overhead spraying for the same amount of production. This bill allows for the choice to commercialize food grown on small plots instead of growing and maintaining water and resource-intensive lawns. The passage of the bill will not increase overall water use since small-scale farming produces low (but meaningful) margins and requires hard work.

The fact that the bill is fiscally neutral is also of great benefit.

We need to sustain the agricultural legacy and economic strength of Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration and please support the passage of HB3372.

Max Edleson