

Submitter: Ashley Carlson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3372

My name is Ashley Carlson and I am a cut flower farmer from Wilsonville, Oregon. I am writing today to support HB 3372. Currently in Oregon it is legal to water a ½ acre garden or use 5,000 gal/day for a commercial purpose, but neither of those apply to growing food and farm products for sale. Why is it legal to use the water for personal use, but selling a bouquet from my garden would mean I was breaking the law? This restriction GREATLY limits what small farms are able to produce.

This personally impacts me because despite our best efforts we are unable to expand our farm beyond what we can water with our self-dug, lined rain-catch irrigation pond. When starting this endeavor 4.5 years ago we were faced with 25 acres of unkempt land to transform and restore in the Stafford area. To meet EFU requirements and fulfill our dreams of providing flowers and veggies to the community, we cleaned up the old overgrown, invaded tree farm and began restoring the land and the soil to grow cut flowers and vegetables. We worked hand in hand with NRCS (and generous grants) to build infrastructure, pollinator hedgerows, rich soil and an organic ecosystem. Most importantly, we needed a way to water our crops. After EVERY attempt to gain a water right for our plan, we hit dead end after dead end. Neighbors held tight to their water rights, even though they hadn't been used for many, many years- yet they held huge monetary value to the landowners. It was frustrating and seemed crazy that we hit a road block to do this good thing. This led us to dig a 60,000 gallon, lined, rain-catch pond. With this harvested rain water we could legally irrigate a very small plot of land for crops to sell. We began growing cut flowers and vegetables and sold at local farmers markets.

However, after a couple of seasons of extreme summers, we quickly realized our 60,000 gal was not enough to sustain what we hoped to irrigate. Crops died in the peak of summer- when they should have been most plentiful. Months of hard work shriveled and died. Also harvesting rain water is a huge job in and of itself!- keeping the pond aerated, algae-free, avoiding clogged drip lines from pond water, watering flowers with August-hot water?!!, etc...! Instead of expanding our little farm we've had to leave beautiful prepped soil beds to sit, and instead focus on a smaller footprint to water. I now grow about 1/16-1/4 acre of cut flowers only at a time. This is purely because we cannot legally water more crops.

Passing this measure means we could grow more flowers to sell, expand our hedgerows and start growing vegetables again for markets. Please consider what this adds to our communities. It was a joy seeing families walk away from our farm

stand with arms of flowers and fresh veggies. Kids were exposed to our kid-veggie bar and kid-sized bouquet making station. We do not do what we do for profit, but we do need to charge a small fee (make it commercial) to sustain what we are trying to do. The farmers' market we sold from most recently has closed for this 2025 summer. A huge reason was lack of local vendors of fresh vegetables and flowers. We no longer sell at farmer's markets.

We need to be realistic about what we prioritize for water use in our state. Allowing people to grow food or farm products for sale with a gallon restriction on ½ acre will not bankrupt the system, and farming is too much work for people to rush into production on such a small scale. Give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves, pass HB 3372.

Thank you,

Ashley Carlson
Bloom by Campbell Family Farms
Wilsonville, Oregon