

My name is Melissa and I am a Flower Farmer from Winston in Douglas County. 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 single zucchini from my garden would mean I was breaking the law?

This personally impacts me because I am a flower farmer of 7 years and I make my sole living from growing flowers sustainably. I have the utmost respect for the land I live and grow on and have always been a conscientious water user. My domestic well has consistently provided for the needs of a two person household, 9 goats and a small flower farm operation. In the summer when all my neighbors' domestic wells are running dry from mere household use we have continued to have ample water. The perception that small farmers put an excessive demand on water resources is downright false. In my experience small farmers are far more cautious with their water use than non-commercial well users.

Additionally the current system for water rights is completely broken. From what I can see the properties in my area that have retained water rights have no viable use for them. I frequently witness these rights being utilized to water lawns in the middle of the afternoon in the highest heat of summer. Completely flagrant wastes of water to retain rights for the increased value to their property. This does not serve agriculture or water conservation in any way. It also blocks active commercial growers from accessing new water rights.

I have built a small farm in an area that is economically challenged and that offers limited career opportunities. Without the right to legally irrigate my flowers my business cannot continue and in all likelihood I would need to move, leaving my property and my well to be used solely for domestic purposes. Which would ironically *increase* the water use on my property if the neighbors in my valley are anything to go by. It's nonsensical.

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,

Melissa Garcia Parry
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