

Dear Legislature Members,

April 6th, 2025

I am writing about a letter we have received from The Watermaster, District 2 dated September 27th 2023. The letter was written to inform my daughter that it was not legal for her to use our well water to cultivate approximately a half an acre of our property with produce intended for sale. My daughter sells the produce she grows at a local farmer's market and from an honor system farm stand that we have on our property. Needless to say we were stunned to hear that using our land to grow food organically and sell to our community was not within our rights as defined by the state of Oregon. For that reason I am urging you to please consider an amendment to this legislation that provides an exemption for small half acre production farms during the upcoming legislative session.

We were told in the letter that we received, that there are already a number of exemptions to the water right permitting process: stock watering, any non-commercial garden of one half acre or less, and also industrial and commercial uses. Why not have one more exemption? If we are already allocating water use for people to grow a half acre of produce for themselves on their property, why wouldn't we also allow them to sell it? Farmers growing food for their community is a rural value that goes back hundreds of years in this country. Farmers markets are places that build community and provide fresh fruits and vegetables to families and small business owners.

We bought this land in 2016 for my daughter to farm. Our realtor knew this and told us it would be okay to put up a farm stand out by the road. My daughter filed a business license to do business as Oak Song Farm in 2017 and we built a small farmstand. Through the hard work of my daughter and family, we developed a business using conservative water practices (less than 1000 gallons a day) on a very small scale, four-acre farm, with ½ an acre of produce. The state of Oregon should be helping small farmers, not restricting them. In the current economic climate it is important to have access to affordable locally grown food. We have been providing food to our local community for the past seven years and now suddenly we are told we must stop. This business was the only source of income for my daughter and her two children. Many other farmers here locally are in the same position as my daughter, because the Watermaster, Lanaya Blakely, told us that she sent out over twenty of these letters to small farms in our area.

It is my understanding that the legislature can change this unfair water regulatory practice and allow people to sell the food that they are already permitted to grow. We are not asking you to allocate any extra water usage, but we would be happy to meter our water usage if necessary. This is an urgent matter that needs to be addressed in the upcoming legislative session. So once again I am asking that an exemption be made for small production half acre farmers to continue to serve their communities by providing them with fresh local food.

Sincerely,

June del Campo
Oak Song Farm
84522 Lorane Hwy.
Eugene Oregon 97405