

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

Greetings! I am writing today on behalf of myself and my partner Tom who own and run Odonata Farm, a very small organic micro-farm which we started back in 2018 and independently own and operate in addition to other off-farm jobs. It is hard work, and we do it because we are passionate about growing healthy food that we can share with our community in a way that is also sustainable for the land and the water resources. We are writing today to express our support for an amendment to HB 3372 which if passed, would allow commercial gardens to be watered from domestic wells as long as the garden is ½ acre or less and with a daily gallon limit.

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. The total amount of area that we irrigate on our small scale farm is under ½ acre, and we are very cognizant and careful with our water use, utilizing drip irrigation and other water conservation measures to grow the crops we eat ourselves and would like to continue to share with our community. Up until 2023, we provided produce in our local community at a small farmers market, where we were the sole vendor providing organic produce and with only one other vendor selling a more limited variety of non-organic produce and fruit from a location further away in the Willamette Valley. We also provided produce to a food advocacy organization called Food Roots who worked with folks in the community to connect up community members with local products. In 2023 when ORWD began engaging in actions to suddenly enforce this issue, we made the very difficult decision to step away from the farmers market and Food Roots and are trying to find a way to re-engage with providing local fresh organic produce to our local community.

Locally produced food is a key element of a resilient and thriving community, especially at a time when other actions are being taken nationally that damage our agricultural industry. Allowing water right holders to use their domestic well water on small acreage commercial operations not only supports their community with accessible fresh produce, but at the same time brings the community together in extraordinary ways.

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. As Tom and I know very well, farming is an intensive labor of love, and we do not feel that passing this amendment would create an incentive for people to rush into production on such a small scale.

Please help to give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves, pass HB 3372.

Thank you,

Michelle and Tom
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