

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 Adam Kotaich and I am a farmer from Eugene. 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. If we can legally grow vegetables, fruits or flowers for your family using a domestic well, we should be allowed to sell those products to our community — but with ethical, reasonable limits that respect our water crisis.

This personally impacts me because it prevents me from achieving my goal to farm on a small scale and provide food for my community. After years of searching, I finally found a farm to lease in March 2025 that fits my needs. However, unless this bill passes, I would not be able to sell the vegetables I grow on that farm.

The farm I'm currently leasing has been growing organic vegetables since 1974. The owners would like to see the farm operation continue and have someone maintain the growing areas, but I cannot afford to lease the land and grow crops if it isn't possible for me to sell the produce.

The property is bordered on one side by a river, with smaller streams flowing down a hill on the opposite side. Water is abundant, yet the need to conserve water is even more apparent. I work as a conservation biologist and native plant nursery manager. I recognize the importance of river flow rate and temperature in maintaining thriving salmon and steelhead populations. I want to do everything I can to support fish populations. I believe small scale organic farms can exist within a healthy ecosystem. It is possible to provide nutrient-dense, locally produced food for our communities without negatively impacting water resources if they're used carefully.

The photo below is a 1/10th acre garden I irrigated from a domestic well with a drip tape system on a timer. The intention was to grow crops through the summer using as little water use as possible. I watered only as needed and for relatively short durations. Most of the crops only required watering once a week when they reached maturity. I could control and close the individual drip lines running the lengths of the rows. As you can see from the photo, most of the area in the garden is not being irrigated, which also saves labor by minimizing weed growth. The drip tape gets the water precisely where it needs to be under the crops and reduces overall water use. I would apply that same care and conservation of resources to farming at a larger scale.



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 $\frac{1}{2}$ acre will not deplete water resources, and farming is too much work for people to rush into production on such a small scale. We need more small-scale community farms that are conscientious of resource use, not more barriers to local food production. Give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves, pass HB 3372.

Thank you,

Adam Kotaich