

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 Christina del Campo 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. Why is it legal to use the water for personal use, but selling a box of strawberries from my field would mean I was breaking the law?

This personally impacts me since I received a letter in the Fall of 2023 informing me that I was using water to irrigate my farm without a water right. Upon speaking with the Water Master I was told I needed to stop using water immediately. I was finishing out my seventh season on this farm. I had a CSA that ran 20 weeks and fed over 15 families. I sold produce at our local farmer's market during the season, which is about 16 weeks long. I also kept our farm stand stocked with produce for locals who stop by on their way home from work or folks who live in the area and don't want to drive all the way to town.

Last year all this stopped. No CSA, No Farmers' Market, and No Produce in the Farm Stand. This was my only source of income for my kids and myself. I had to pivot and find work off the farm. I invested 7 years of energy and money, and worked hard to build a business. My whole field which is half of an acre is all on drip lines and has been since we started. We use between 750- 1000 gallons a day to irrigate the field. The water rights exemptions state we can water ½ an acre of land, that we can use 15,000 gallons a day for our household, and 5,000 gallons for a business. But when it comes to the business of selling fresh produce it is not allowed.

In this time when there are produce shortages at the grocery stores and nationwide food recalls it makes sense to support small farms. If we choose to grow food instead of lawns with our allotted water what is the problem with us selling it? I have been told this is a water issue, but I do not see it that way. I am following all the rules of how much water a household or business is allowed to use from a singular well. The amount of water I am using is not unlawful, it is only my selling of the produce that makes what I am doing punishable by fine. Why is that? By passing HB 3372 you would help us to serve our community. We are an established business in our area. When people stop at our farm stand they are hoping to find more than just eggs and bread for their meals.

Give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves, pass HB 3372.

Thank you,

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