

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 Alexis Reed, and I am a community member 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 single zucchini from my garden would mean I was breaking the law?

This personally impacts me because:

My family and I have been customers at our local farmers market since we moved nearby 16 years ago. I often say that my son grew up there. He learned to walk up and down the ramp of the grange where the market is held, and now he performs traditional music for the audience of neighbors and visitors.

Farmers markets are integral to our community. They create a space for neighbors to get to know each other and build connections to support each other. Through vendors, we've found summer camps and other opportunities for our son that we wouldn't have found searching the Internet. Getting to know people at the market strengthens our ties in our neighborhood in case of emergency as well.

Additionally, people with disabilities benefit from farmers markets. As a behavior professional for adults with developmental disabilities, I see the importance of farmers markets for people who become so overstimulated in large, crowded spaces that supermarkets are extremely difficult to manage. Several of the people I work for love their farmers markets because they are comfortable shopping in an open, outdoor space where they can connect personally with the farmers. We also had a neighbor who was immunosuppressed for years but was able to come to the farmers market to safely buy their produce and visit with neighbors (who include vendors).

Farmers markets have so many benefits, but they don't happen without the farmers and the food they grow. It is counter-productive to the health of our communities not to allow small scale farmers to access water to grow food. Our farmers market (The Spencer Creek Community Growers Market) is at risk of closing after this season because vendors have had to stop participating due to this water rights issue. If the market closes, we will lose an important part of our community, furthering the isolation perpetuated by our modern way of life. This isn't just unfortunate but can be a risk for older neighbors and those with disabilities who rely on the market for a sense of belonging.

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.

Please give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves and the continued opportunity to nurture their community connections by passing HB 3372.

Thank you,
Alexis Reed