

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

Greetings. My name is Peter and I am a farmer from Woodburn. I am writing today to support HB 3372-5. Currently in Oregon it is legal to water a ½ acre garden or use up to 5,000 gal/day for a commercial purpose, but neither of those apply to growing food and farm products for sale. It seems inconsistent for it to be legal to use the water for personal use, or even to run a small business, but selling produce from my garden would mean I was breaking the law.

This personally impacts me and my family's livelihood. We own approximately 5 acres of EFU land, some of which we use to provide food for my community and generate income for my family. While we do have some non-irrigated crops, such as hazelnuts and kiwi, we also have grown many crops that require irrigation: tomatoes and lettuce, for example. Since learning more exactly the nature of water use laws, we have not been selling those crops. The curators of farmer's markets we previously were involved in desperately want us to come back. Our operation never irrigated more than ½ acre, in fact, it was quite a bit less. Also, we always used drip irrigation to ensure we were using the water most efficiently, not even close to 5,000 gal/day. Our operation would fall well within the existing exemptions for domestic and commercial use, but since our product comes from irrigating plants, we cannot sell it. Our community needs access to fresh, local produce from our farm and others.

I know we need to be realistic about what we prioritize for water use in our state. But I believe allowing people to grow food or farm products for sale with a gallon restriction on ½ acre or less will not bankrupt the system. It is highly improbable that many more people would rush into production on such a small scale. The solution in this bill does not increase the overall water available for exempt use, it simply allows people to sell the food and farm products they've already been legally producing. Give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves, pass HB 3372-5.

Thank you,

Peter Turner

Woodburn, OR