

Submitter: Sue Kacskos

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3372

TO: 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 Sue K. and I am a farmer from Eugene, OR. I am writing to support HB3372-5.

As you are aware, currently in Oregon it is legal to water a 1/2 acre garden or use 5000 gal/day for a commercial purpose. However, neither of those approved uses apply to growing food and farm products for sale. This needs to be changed. Please help pass HB3372-5 and allow people to sell food and farm products grown within the exemptions of domestic wells.

This personally impacts me. We currently produce chickens and goats. We also have a +/- 1/8 acre garden where we grow food and flowers. I would like to be able to legally sell my excess food/flowers at market in order to provide a local source of food for my community. Although my E.F.U. zoned farm has very old surface water rights, because the property has been divided at least twice since the original water rights were granted, the legal points of surface water diversion are on neighboring properties that, up to this point, have been unwilling to me grant access. Hence, I am forced to rely on groundwater from my well for all my water uses. As a farmer, I am very aware of the environmental concerns associated with water use, including drought, falling water tables and dry wells. To mitigate these concerns and keep our water use to a minimum, we use drip irrigation as well as employ other farm practices (e.g., mulch, compost) that help reduce our need for water. By employing such practices, we are well within the 5K gal/day current legal limit.

Since we participate in a local farmers market selling our meat products, we are very aware of the difficulty in finding vegetable farmers with legal water rights. Vegetable farmers are key to having customers at a farmers market. Several vegetable farmers who used to sell at our market no longer do so because they have been advised that they cannot legally do so. Without the keystone vegetable farmer at market, customer traffic drops off considerably. Fewer customers results in fewer other vendors market. Looking at the big picture, this leads to decreased community access to local food and increased food insecurity.

I agree that we need to take a close look at Oregon water policy. But we need to be

realistic about what we prioritize for water use in our state. Supporting HB3372-5 will not increase the overall water currently available for exempt use-- farming is too much work for people to rush into production on such a small scale. HB3372-5 simply allows people to sell the food and farm products that are already legal to grow. Please give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves. Pass HB3372-5.

Thank you,

Sue K.  
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