

Submitter: Mindy Sandford
On Behalf Of: Veneta's Downtown Farmers' Market
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3372

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

We are writing to you as the Board of Directors of Veneta's Downtown Farmers' Market to show our support of HB 3372-5. This bill would allow small farmers and growers to irrigate under the exemption that allows watering up to a ½ acre garden, or using 5,000 gal/day for a commercial purpose. However, as things stand currently, if this legally exempt water is used to legally irrigate a half acre garden, it is illegal to sell the produce coming off of this land. HB3372-5 would rectify this arbitrary exclusion of small farmers and growers from the exemption, and make produce grown within this exemption legal for sale.

The recent enforcement of this law has an outsized negative impact on rural farmers' markets like Veneta's Downtown Farmers' Market which serve residents in the greater Fern Ridge area. Our market is small, and relies on small local farmers and families who sell surplus produce from their gardens, who spend their weekends coming to sell at Veneta's Downtown Farmers' Market to share their abundance with their community and to earn some extra money.

These small producers are extremely important to making fresh, healthy, locally-grown produce available to our community members, who rely on the farmers market for their families' nutrition.

Our farmers market is not only a place for shopping, but also a community gathering space. It teaches children about where their food comes from, and it is an incubator space where people can start their small businesses, not only within farming, but also baking, crafting, etc. As such, it stimulates our local rural economy and offers people a means to provide for themselves and their family.

We wish to keep being able to offer this market space for years to come, but with the current rules and the newly implemented enforcement, we fear that it will be hard to maintain and recruit vendors. Farming is already very hard as it is, and we do not want the fear of criminalization to stand in the way of the people who are passionate about growing fresh food for their community.

The types of small scale growers who sell produce at our farmers markets are growing food mostly on their own residential properties. They are extremely conscious of their growing practices including their water use, they take good care of their land, their communities, and their families.

Please pass HB 3372-5, so our small rural farmers market can continue being a community hub, a small business incubator, and we can continue our mission of being a place of Local Food to Local People.

Thank you,
Mindy Sandford, Chairperson
Veneta's Downtown Farmers' Market
PO Box 504, Veneta, OR