

Submitter: Valerie Rocco

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3372

My name is Val Rocco and I am a small farmer from Dorena. I am writing today to support HB 3372-5. 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 I was contacted directly by the water master to inform me that using water from my own well, was not one of the exempt uses according to Oregon water law because I was selling my produce commercial. I had to stop selling my products until I had an alternative water source available or was issued water right. Therefore, I wasn't able to sell my produce last season. I spent a large amount of that time figuring out how to fund rainwater catchment tanks and apply for grants. The farmers market where I sold was impacted because fruit and veggie vendors are always challenging to find and then folks like me were eliminated from selling their products. Before I knew this type of water usage was illegal I was selling at my local farmers market and other area farmers markets for 18 years. My business and community relationships have suffered. But perhaps most importantly, area residents' access to local produce, has been limited. This is especially noticeable during times of crisis, like during the wildfires or smoke season, during the ice storm, snowstorm, or flooding. These are the times when people need access to produce and food in their own communities because they don't have the ability to travel to Eugene to access these essentials. Don't take away small communities abilities to provide for and sustain themselves, especially as we continue to get more severe climactic events!

When I was producing food for market, I was irrigating 95% of my crops with drip irrigation, which is a known highly efficient watering technique, which only applies water directly at the base of the plants. In fact I have calculated about my farm business requires 15,000 gallons of water for the entire season From April through October. That's equivalent to three days worth of personal use limits! All of my water came from my well. I ensured the quality of my water by doing lab tests and that what I was taking was not impacting the quantity of my water by doing flow tests. Small farmers in my experience are very in tune with using their resources as efficiently as possible.

The ability to continue to use water from my well to raise fruits and vegetables from my garden for commercial sales to my local community allows me to be a productive member of my community. It allows me to use the land that I purchased with the

intention of growing produce on for what I consider a higher purpose, to provide for my community.

Allowing people to grow food or farm products for sale with a gallon restriction on $\frac{1}{2}$ acre will not bankrupt the system, and farming is too much work for people to 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 it is already legal to grow. Give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves, pass HB 3372-5.

Thank you,

Val Rocco