

Submitter: Cheryl Thoen
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

I urge you to prioritize state investment in sustainable, climate resilient agriculture, by renewing funding for Natural Climate Solutions and Food Systems Resilience.

Climate resilience for farmers and ranchers is critical to our future and HB2927 and HB5006 provide the tools to farmers that they need to continue in this environmental and economic climate. Supporting farmers in learning how to succeed in our current environment is not a "nice-to-have." We have been on the right path in Oregon. It's important that we don't lose the progress that we've made in supporting our farmers and ranchers, while the federal government is abandoning them.

I urge you to fund HB2979, the Food Systems Resilience bill, which provides funding for Oregon's Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grants as well as similar funding for Food Hubs and Farmers Markets. The Farmer & Rancher Disaster Resilience Grants are supporting Oregon's small and underserved producers to be more resilient to fire and extreme weather events – funding things like trailers for evacuation, shade cloth, and irrigation efficiency. This funding is a great alternative to traditional disaster relief funding, as it has given farmers the resources to maintain their crops and livestock through disasters, rather than being compensated by the State after they lose them. This is a strategic and responsible use of state funding.

Please also include the investment of \$5M for the Natural and Working Lands (NWL) Fund in OWEB's budget, as included in the Governor's recommended budget. The NWL Fund provides incentives and technical support to support adoption of natural climate solutions on Oregon's natural and working lands, including farms and ranches. The Fund invests in existing programs and projects within state agencies, including programs that existed in statute without funding. Farms and ranches are on the front lines of climate change, and the same agricultural practices that mitigate climate change help farms and ranches be more resilient to climate impacts.