

Submitter: Alison Sexauer
On Behalf Of: RVFSN
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

I am here to urge your support of HB 2979, which provides essential funding for Oregon's farmers, ranchers, food hubs, and farmers markets.

As a representative of the Rogue Valley Food System Network, I have seen firsthand the transformative impact of Food System Resilience funding in our community. Over the past 5 years, our region has weathered historic wildfires, droughts, and the pandemic—each event exposing the fragility of our industrial food system and the critical need for targeted investment in regional food systems.

The Rogue Valley Community Food Assessment engaged over 2,000 residents and revealed a 50% increase in small-scale farmers in the last ten years, despite these challenges. We've also seen direct-to-consumer sales in Jackson County rise by 80%, and value-added product sales triple across the region. Yet, barriers like infrastructure gaps, rising land costs, and labor shortages persist?.

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HB 2979 funding has allowed us to begin addressing these challenges with actionable results:

We've strengthened food hub infrastructure to support over 380 local farms generating more than \$12 million annually through markets, CSAs, and farm stands.

We've leveraged grants to expand neighborhood access to farmers markets, increase CSA participation, and improve food transport routes for rural communities?.

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We've used resilience funding to maintain operations through climate disruptions and smoke events, including developing mobile infrastructure for farmers markets that doubled as emergency response assets?.

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The Rogue Valley Food System Action Plan outlines clear goals for 2025–2030: investing in a thriving local farm economy, reducing food insecurity, and strengthening climate and disaster preparedness in the food system. HB 2979 directly aligns with these goals by funding:

Food hub development,

Emergency food and farm infrastructure,

Farmers market resilience,

And small farm business continuity?

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This is not just about food. It's about public health, rural economic vitality, and the ability of our communities to withstand the next crisis.

HB 2979 passed unanimously out of the House Committee on Ag, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water with overwhelming support. But continuity of funding is key. When funding disappears, so do the programs—and with them, the hard-earned trust and momentum in our communities.

Please fund HB 2979. Let's continue building a resilient, inclusive, and thriving food system for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your leadership.