

Subject: Opposition Testimony – Oregon HB 4153

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Corey Dickman and I am a farmer operating in Marion County, Oregon. I am writing to submit testimony in opposition to HB 4153.

I want to begin by stating that I strongly support the ability of farmers to market the products they grow and produce. Farm stands, as currently allowed under Oregon land use law, serve an important role in connecting farmers directly with consumers, adding value to agricultural products, and supporting the economic viability of family farms. I do not take issue with farm stands that are rooted in the sale of products produced on the farm.

However, I have significant concerns with the direction HB 4153 proposes by allowing counties to approve “farm stores” as a nonfarm use on lands zoned for exclusive farm use (EFU).

Oregon’s land use planning system was built with clear intent: to preserve and protect our most productive agricultural lands for agricultural production. Over time, that system has been tested by incremental expansions of nonfarm uses. Each individual expansion may appear small, but collectively they erode the integrity of our farmland base.

Allowing farm stores that can sell a broad array of products — including goods not produced on the farm — crosses an important line. At that point, the use begins to function more like rural retail than agriculture. This creates several concerns:

1. **Erosion of EFU Protections**

Expanding retail-style operations onto EFU land weakens the foundational purpose of farm zoning and invites further nonfarm commercial creep.

2. **Precedent Setting**

Once counties are authorized to approve farm stores as nonfarm uses, it becomes increasingly difficult to draw defensible boundaries on future requests for additional commercial activities.

3. **Land Value and Compatibility Pressures**

Increased commercial activity on farmland can inflate land values, create traffic and infrastructure pressures, and generate conflicts with surrounding farm operations.

4. **Deviation from Agricultural Intent**

The core justification for allowing limited retail on farms has always been tied to marketing farm products. When the majority of goods sold may originate elsewhere, that justification no longer holds.

I believe there is a clear and reasonable distinction between:

- **Farm stands** → Selling products produced on the farm or by regional agricultural producers.
- **Farm stores** → Broader retail operations that may rely heavily on outside goods and function as commercial enterprises.

Protecting that distinction is critical to maintaining the integrity of Oregon's land use framework.

Farmers should absolutely retain the right to sell what they grow. But EFU zoning should not become a pathway for expanded nonfarm retail development under the banner of agriculture.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose HB 4153 or, at minimum, significantly narrow its scope to ensure that retail activity on EFU land remains clearly and primarily tied to on farm agricultural production.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued work in protecting Oregon's agricultural lands.

Sincerely,
Corey Dickman
Silverton, Oregon