

February 10, 2026

I strongly, strongly urge you to oppose HB 4153, which would significantly weaken Oregon's long-standing protections for exclusive farm use (EFU) zoned land.

The bill would require counties to allow up to 10,000 square foot permanent multi-use farm stores in EFU zones. Without safeguards to ensure agriculture remains a property's primary use, the stores would be permitted to do nonfarm retail sales, food and alcohol beverage service and sales, and unlimited big events like weddings and concerts.

Commercial destinations of this kind require significant upfront capital costs that turn EFU zones into a pay-to-play system. This undermines family farmers and prioritizes commercial development over agricultural preservation. It also decreases land affordability even more than it already is, thereby reducing the ability of small and beginning farmers to start farms and succeed!

Another effect of HB 4153 would be to enable commercial entities to easily take advantage of lower tax assessments and buy up cheap farm land to develop into event venues and retail outlets, without ever intending to meaningfully farm the land in the first place. Purchasing 10 acres and a couple of cows does not contribute to a farm business or economy, and yet it would count as "farm use" under this bill and allow it to qualify for a farm store.

State law already allows wineries, farm stands, agritourism events, and other commercial and recreational activities in EFU zones. But importantly, it requires agriculture to remain the predominant use of the land.

Additionally, HB 4153 would eliminate the "good neighbor" analysis currently required for agritourism permits to ensure events and nonfarm activities do not negatively impact surrounding farms. This means not only will commercial-minded landowners less interested in farming limit their own use and preservation of resource lands, it will also hurt neighboring farmers that engage in typical farm practices (e.g., use of pesticides) to use on their own land to produce products and earn a living.

I very much appreciate your consideration of my comments opposing HB 4153.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions. Thank you.

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