

HB 4153 is a disaster that will cripple the ability of starting farmers to buy larger pieces of land and open exclusive farm use land to purchase and non-agricultural use by corporate interests.

Consider the provision that requires a certain number of acres to be farmed. It is no secret that farming is a changing industry. Small farms should be encouraged, and one of the best ways to have a successful small farm is to open a farm stand. It opens the farm to the public, allows them to see where their food comes from, and creates a connection between the food, the farmer, and the community. If this bill is passed, opening a farm stand will be next to impossible unless a new farmer purchases a plot of land less than ten acres. If any plot of land is larger than that, large portions of it must be put into production before a farm stand can be opened. This is without considering that there may not be demand for that much agricultural production in the area, and that the actual tillable acreage on the farm might be much less than 50%.

As a case study, you could look at the property that was recently purchased by **Blackberry Bog Farm** in Knappa, Oregon. It is 133 acres, and only about 35-40 acres are #2 soil according to the state soil survey. The rest is a creek, wetlands adjacent to the creek, and hills with shallow bedrock. It is entirely possible that no property owner would ever be able to responsibly farm the required 45 acres. It is also unreasonable to expect any person or even a community to immediately put 45 acres of what is essentially abandoned farmland into production. Given the past few decades that have seen the closure of many dairies, produce farms, and mink farms in Clatsop County, it is also unlikely that a farm would be able to make enough money to survive without a farm stand.

In practice, this will severely limit the opportunities for small and beginning farmers as they will be forced to only buy a property of the size that they can develop to meet the acreage requirements if they want to have a farm stand. **There should be a way for a beginning farmer to purchase an EFU property of any size and open a farm stand**, and a suggestion for such a system is below.

For those same reasons, the property that has been purchased by Blackberry Bog Farm could have easily been taken over by a large corporate interest. They would have the resources to develop such a property, and could more easily take abandoned farmland, clear it, plant it in hay, and use the rest for massive pumpkin patches and farm to table dinners.

Separately, the lack of a usage requirement for tracts above 80 acres is absurd. One might be tempted to think the people in favor of this bill have farms that are significantly larger than 80 acres and don't want to have to use most of it for farming.

There has been some discussion about farm units. While the idea is interesting the language is flawed. It currently only allows farm units if the farm store will be on a parcel less than 20 acres, again limiting the size of farms that can be purchased by beginning farmers. If the language were changed to allow acreage usage requirements to be per farm unit, rather than tract, it would allow large corporate interests to buy up and use EFU, so long as they have a 45-acre field on a farm somewhere. Think of spirit Halloween, but with pumpkin patches.

On the subject of limiting retail space on shelves, again, this hurts smaller farmers. Blackberry Bog Farm currently runs their sales out of a tent, though they have mentioned plans to build a small shed. If they do not build a shed they will not be able to sell any retail goods at all, which seems likely to hurt their business, and 25% of a 20x20 shed would be a very small area, despite the fact that most of their product is still being sold just outside in a non-permanent structure. They likely don't have the funding to build a large farm store, which in turn limits their indoor space, which in turn limits their ability to sell retail goods at all, again not a problem for a large corporate interest.

I do like to offer solutions:

Require 50% of land used for profit generating activities be used for farm use, regardless of tract size.

Codify that roadside stands are an allowable use on any agriculturally zoned land.

If not these suggestions, perhaps take the simple way - if 25% of annual sales for agritourism and retail is too small, increase it to 30. Clarifying farm stand regulations and agritourism standards would be wonderful, but changing them in a short session without proper examination of the potential impacts (and clearly there has not been proper examination) could damage the foreseeable future of farming in this state.

Respectfully,

Andrew Thompson