

Submitter: Kelsey Holstrom
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or HB4153
Topic:

I am a Lorane local, active Grange member, and I love my community of farmers, gardeners, and eaters. I care deeply about agriculture and want to preserve & encourage Oregon food production. Please consider my comments on HB4153. This bill will kill small farms. This bill will lead to monopolization and consolidation of farm land into the hands of a select wealthy few. Oregon's economic strength is rooted in land use that protects and encourage its citizens' ability to independently pursue their natural endeavors, no matter the size. The language of HB4153 disproportionately impacts small farmers. There is immeasurable value in diverse, dispersed networks of thriving food production. Resilient food systems require economies of scale. My neighbors that grow food should not carry heavier burdens than giant corporations who export most of their products out of state.

There are a few key points that create this unfortunate bias.

First, the seemingly arbitrary parcel and farm use size requirements to qualify for a farm store. These awkward stair step stipulations are more cumbersome and prohibitive for smaller parcels. Income should not factor into qualifying for a farm store, but if it must, then I would strongly advocate that the larger the parcel, the proportionally more income must be derived from the farming activities. Smaller farmers, smaller profits, smaller requirements.

Additionally, the language of this bill prohibits farm stores entirely for operations under 10 acres. I strongly oppose this. County zoning rules tend to reflect state rules, and this framework is detrimental to the operations that would benefit most from direct farm sales. Please do not penalize small farmers. There is no logical reason for it.

The final major issue with this bill as written is how it changes current rules to encourage non-farm products and activities. The heart of a farm stand is... the farm on which it resides. Allowing large venues and events carte blanche and stipulating 25% of the square footage allowed for non-farm goods paves the way for the intention of this bill to be completely warped. I don't want weddings and concerts to be the main revenue drivers on agricultural land. I don't want farm stores the size of a grocery store on agricultural land. The purpose of EFU/FF is to protect valuable farm land, not sell it out to tourists and retail.

Farm stores are absolutely a crucial component of a robust farm income, and I support many of the provisions of this bill that expand that opportunity. However, I strongly believe the language here strays from the intent, and could have devastating consequences for farmers. Please consider the following changes:

- Remove the acreage requirements on parcels 20 acres or less. Remove the income requirements on parcels 20 acres or less. Stipulate the parcel must be in active

agriculture production

- Require the majority (at least 51%) of revenue from of goods sold at the farm stand be produced on site, and require processed products be derived from the local agricultural area

Cap fee-based event revenue from the farm stand, as is in current statute, while also capping incidental item footprint in the store itself.

Maintain the definition of farm stand in statute to ensure county interpretations remain consistent and existing farm stands are not jeopardized

- Carefully reconsider the blanket allowance of ticketed events as permissible farm stand uses. There should be safeguards and limitations here to maintain the primary use of farms, and not let potential profit from agritourism consume farmland that should be used to actually produce food

I appreciate the efforts to expand income opportunities for farmers. With additional safeguards and adjustments away from penalizing small farmers just for being small, this bill holds merit. Please ensure the intent of agricultural land remains agriculture, and that the rules apply equitably to all sizes of operations. Thank you for your time.