

Dear OR House Agriculture Committee,

My first experience trying to obtain a USDA Farm Services Agency farm ownership loan to purchase a 80 acre farm in Minnesota was a dismal failure. After spending countless hours on the phone with FSA staff and even more hours filling out their paperwork, we were disqualified because we had only 2 years of Schedule F tax forms instead of the required 3 years. Our business plan was solid as were our financials, but that was not enough. A couple years later we tried to apply for a VA mortgage to purchase a house that came with a little bit of land. We made the mistake of mentioning the "f-word" (farm) and VA promptly told us that they don't fund the purchase of farms. That would be a business and their mortgages are not for businesses. We wondered how many military veterans were operating businesses out of their homes, homes funded by VA. But to the VA, farm was a bad word. More recently we got qualified for a conventional home mortgage and made sure not to mention the "f-word", instead just letting the mortgage broker think that we just wanted a bit of acreage so we could have a nice view. But to get to the point in our lives where we have proven we can run a half-a million dollar a year farming business but not be able to mention that we are farmers for fear of loosing out on purchasing farmland is truly a sad state of affairs for the future farmers of this country. We must do better to ensure the viability of agriculture. When banks are scared of lending to farmers and our federal ag programs are tightening their belts, we must develop state solutions to the credit problem.

As a farm consultant and author of the new book "Farms With a Future", I have heard countless stories from other farmers around this country who struggle to access capital to purchase land, equipment, breeding stock, or other key infrastructure to build their businesses. These are people that work incredibly hard, have proven business models, but still can't access the capital they need in order to expand their ability to feed people. Meanwhile, farmland sits idle, covered with weeds or increasingly coming under the threat of development because it is not viable for agriculture. Yet we have people who want to farm! Sixteen states have Aggie Bond programs- it is time for Oregon to provide the same. It is a win-win solution that will not cost the state money but will allow more new farmers to get on the land and have the necessary equipment and infrastructure to produce healthy food for our communities and beyond. I support HB2700, won't you?

kindly,

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