

Dear Honorable Witt and the Oregon House Agricultural Committee,

Feb 11, 2013

I am a beginning, female, small-scale farmer trying to get my farming business off the ground here in the Willamette Valley. I am writing today to give **full support to HB 2700**.

I grew up on a 62 acre farm in NW Indiana and watched the farm, along with hundreds of other small farms during the 1980's, succumb to development and large-scale industrialized agriculture.

After graduating college in Biology from a small, liberal arts college in Florida I moved to Northern California. Within two years (after serving for AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards Program) I began interning on, volunteering on, and researching small farms in Northern California and Southern Oregon. My planning to own and run a farm had begun. That was 1999. Twelve years later; after obtaining a Master's at Humboldt State in Ecology, working for 10 years in a career of land and species conservation and management, continuing to work and volunteer on more farms in my spare time, saving some capital, and writing my business plan; I made the leap to the Portland and Willamette Valley area to give the dream of running my own farm and helping to support the community in which it lies a shot.

I knew coming in without land already inherited and without enough capital to both buy land and start a farming business, it was going to be difficult. But, I cannot re-iterate just HOW difficult it really is. I looked immediately into FSA and SBA loans, but without tax returns to "prove" my farming experience, I didn't qualify. Most beginning farmers have interned or apprenticed on farms usually didn't make enough money to even qualify for having to pay taxes. And don't get me wrong, they do this by choice, because learning this skill is more important to them than the profit side of things. And the way farming policy stands now, it is too expensive to have hired help for the small farmer. I like to think of it as a modern day Food Corps, it is a service the person is giving to our farms, farmlands, and our domestic food sovereignty and learning the trade in return.

So, to make a long story short, I ran my farm last year as an urban farm. Leasing approximately a fifth of an acre, running a 7 person CSA, and selling my produce at 3 Portland Farmer's Markets. My business costs and expenses came out even (and that is at 1/5th of an acre!). My cost of living, however, took a large bite out of my capital. I have been blessed this year to find 10 acres of land with living quarters here in the Willamette Valley and have signed a 10 year lease. I am excited and thrilled that my farm has a permanent home. The next few years are a critical time for my farm, when greater costs for infrastructure can make or break a farm. This is the time in which a beginning farmer, a serious and proven beginning farmer with a plan, needs the most help.

There are so many of us here in Oregon just waiting for that chance; the chance to give back to the community, the land, and the state. Everyone knows we need more farmers and everyone seems to know how difficult it is to make farming (sustainable farming) actually sustainable. **HB 2700** is a great starting point in which to make that a bit easier for the dedicated, passionate beginning farmers here in this state.

Thank you for your consideration and would truly appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Carrie Sendak

Owner and Operator of Mama Tee's Farmstead

Willamina, OR

www.mamateesfarm.wordpress.com