

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Services
Co-chairs Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward and Rep. Dan Rayfield

From: Rebecca Landis on behalf of the Oregon Farmers' Markets Association

Subject: Testimony for FDNP in Oregon Health Authority budget

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Farm Direct Nutrition Program.

I'm writing to support retaining funding for FDNP at or near the level funded in the 2015 session. I understand that the governor's budget removed one-time approvals as a starting point in a hard biennium. As applied to FDNP, that would result in less than half the funding in this 17-19 biennium, which would represent a significant loss of access to local produce.

Although parts of our state are recovering well economically, we don't see food security rising as it should. FDNP provides healthy food to vulnerable populations, helps local farm direct producers increase their customer base, and helps the communities where the farmers spend their earnings.

I'd like to underline the triple-win nature of FDNP and other nutrition programs, which are possibly the fastest and surest economic stimulus in your legislative toolkits.

I am past president of Oregon Farmers' Markets Association (OFMA), a membership organization whose mission is supporting local agriculture and healthy communities by strengthening and promoting Oregon's farmers' markets. I am a current board member at large and advise OFMA on various policy issues.

In addition, I have had the privilege of managing farmers' markets since 1995, just before Oregon began offering coupons (now vouchers) for participants in the Women, Infants & Children program to spend in farmers' markets. A few years later, we added the Senior component, and the Farm Direct Nutrition Program was extended to farm stands.

While I focus on growing SNAP in Oregon farmers' markets, it's worth stopping to appreciate some special qualities of the FDNP, a modestly sized program that ***educates as it feeds***.

The FDNPs focus solely on fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs, and they are aimed at sales by farm direct growers, who spend those additional revenues right in their local communities.

We see multi-generational family groups using vouchers in farmers' markets, and I'm sure that is also true at farm stands. Without FDNP, many families might never be introduced to the benefits of buying fresh produce direct from the grower.

Some families stretch their vouchers over weeks or months, while others buy in quantity to save money on preserving foods they can eat over the winter. Either way, I am thrilled to see kids learning how to manage food budgets and enhance the quality of family meals.

Thank you for your time and consideration of continued FDNP funding at or near 2015 levels.