

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing as both a concerned citizen and member of a local food group (the Umqua Edibles Project) whose mission is to support a local network of nutritious foods accessible to all. As such, I urge the passage of HB3249, the Agricultural Heritage Program Act. Agricultural lands are in need of focused legislative protection. In spite of Oregon's landmark landuse laws, prime agricultural lands have declined precipitously over the years and will continue to do so without intervention. The pressures of a growing population and related economic pressures dictate that to be true. However, agricultural lands once lost will never be regained. They are necessary not only to support Oregon's agricultural economy, but also for the role they play in keeping our waters and watersheds pure and our wildlife healthy.

HB3249 will help keep working lands in production through multiple means. It will offer working lands easements to help the 80% of Oregon farmers who are family farmers keep farming as an economically viable way of life. It will help encourage good stewardship of those lands protecting watersheds and habitat necessary for drinking water and the recreation sector of the economy. It will help our aging farm population plan for the transition of their working lands in a way that allows those lands to remain in production.

While the oft neglected rural parts of the state clearly stand to benefit from this legislation, everyone who eats benefits too. Please support HB3249.

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