

Salem Harvest

'To feed hungry families by harvesting food that would go to waste'

**Testimony for SB241 Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Submitted by Elise Bauman
February 5, 2019**

Salem Harvest supports SB 241 to renew and raise the Oregon Crop Donation Tax Credit. Our mission is to feed hungry families by harvesting food that would go to waste. As a non-profit organization, Salem Harvest works with growers to harvest crops that, for one reason or another, aren't being harvested. We bring volunteers out to the farms to do the harvesting and our volunteers consist of families feeding children or are homeless, unemployed, elderly or low-income. A portion of the crop they harvest goes home with the volunteer for their family's use while the majority is donated to Marion Polk Food Share and is distributed to other food insecure families through their 120 food pantries across Marion and Polk counties.

In 2018, 756 distinct volunteers harvested just over 408,000 pounds of fresh produce and since our inception in 2010, we have harvest 2.35 million pounds. Last year we worked with 46 growers and through all the years, 83 growers have contributed. This would not have been possible without a tax credit for crop donations. Each and every grower that we are in contact with receives either a printed crop donation worksheet or a link to the Oregon Department of Revenue's website to find it. Every grower many not use the credit, but all of our growers know about it and have the option to consider it.

When speaking with growers, especially for the first time, I'm often asked how difficult it will be for them to get involved with our program; how much time and equipment will be needed to support our efforts. They are pleased to learn that we required next to nothing from them other than instructions and authorization to access the field. Harvesting a crop can be expensive and often times, I hear that the current 15% credit is not enough to cover the harvesting costs. I believe that more of these crops that are not being harvested for the purpose of which they were grown would be harvested and donated IF the credit was increased.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Elise Bauman
Executive Director
Salem Harvest