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Via e-mail: haglu.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2573 (Cranberries) Testimony

Dear Chair Clem and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2573. We have concerns about the potential impacts of removing cranberries from the definition of high value farmland. Cranberries are one of Oregon's most valuable and important crops. They are a low-growing perennial that grows on a woody vine and they take time to establish. In 2017 cranberries brought in \$12.7 million in revenue to the state and Oregon is the third largest producer of cranberries in the nation. The high-value farmland protections afforded in ORS 215.715, which would be removed as part of this bill, ensure that Oregon's best food-producing soils are protected from conversion and conflicts from nonfarm uses. In particular, without such protections, nonfarm developments such as golf courses could occur on these lands. Further it is a slippery slope to remove one crop from the definition of high-value farmland, especially where that crop often grows in the same soils as many of the other listed high-value crops.

We understand that this bill may be driven by a misunderstanding about the ability for a farmer to change farm uses on a site from cranberries to another farm crop or use (such as grazing or pasture). Farm uses as defined in ORS 215.203 are outright uses on farmland and do not require a permit, even when changing types of farm uses. Absent a more concrete reason, we cannot support removing cranberries from the definition of high-value farmland.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Meriel L. Darzen
Rural Lands Staff Attorney