



February 24, 2019

Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction

jccr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: HB 2020 Testimony for Public Hearing on February 25th

To Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Power, members of the committee,

I am writing on behalf of the American Farmland Trust (AFT), a national nonprofit organization which has worked for nearly 40 years to protect farm and ranchland, promote sound agricultural practices, and keep farmers and ranchers on the land. As a member of the US Climate Alliance Impact Partnership, American Farmland Trust aims to assist states in developing and implementing appropriate climate policy actions. **We are concerned by the omission of dedicated investments in natural and working lands in the proposed 2019 climate change legislation (HB 2020).** Oregon's 16 million acres of farmland and ranchland should be central to strategies to sequester carbon and are vital infrastructure for adaptation and resilience to the effects of climate change on water, human health, and the economy.

Farmers and ranchers are on the frontlines in this era of climate and energy uncertainties. Few will feel the impact more directly than farmers and ranchers. Yet at the same time, agriculture holds great promise to combat climate change and create resilience to it. By investing in farmland protection, practices that sequester carbon, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions on farm and ranchland, we can improve producers' bottom lines, foster more resilient agricultural systems, and address climate change.

At the forefront of these efforts for decades, American Farmland Trust sees three actions that can and must be taken:

1. Sequestering carbon

Globally, soils store two to three times more carbon than the atmosphere and vegetation combined. Climate-smart agricultural practices can not only stop soil carbon loss, but reverse it, putting atmospheric carbon back into our soil. Climate-smart farming practices including no-till, cover cropping, nutrient management, composting, and improved grazing management hold significant power to sequester carbon. For example, adopting an individual practice such as growing cover crops on the bare soils after harvest of the five primary crops (i.e., corn, soybean, cotton, rice, and wheat) could sequester 103 Tg CO₂e per year. And additional agronomic practices can be stacked to sequester multiple times this value.

2. Avoided emissions through farmland protection

When farmland is lost to development, land converts to uses that produce significantly higher GHG emissions. AFT studies in California and New York have shown that efforts to protect farmland while simultaneously encouraging smart growth reduce future GHG emissions by as much as 66 times over

other land uses. When we retain farmland, we put a stop to activities that would otherwise exacerbate climate change, while simultaneously realizing benefits from sequestering carbon on those lands.

3. Reducing current emissions from farm and ranch operations

Advances in crop genetics, irrigation technologies, precision agriculture, and on-farm renewable energy generation, coupled with a focus on climate-smart agricultural practices that aim to enhance soil health, hold great potential to reduce emissions from agriculture.

These actions are among the largest lower cost opportunities available among natural solutions to climate mitigation. These solutions are not reliant on innovations in technology, they can be implemented efficiently and cost effectively right now. **We urge you not delay in investing in these solutions, and to include a specific commitment of at least 37% of the Oregon Climate Investments Fund for natural and working lands to be a part of the global solution.**

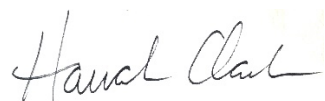
Growing public demand, through the market place and political process, to significantly improve environmental outcomes on working lands—for climate regulation, flood protection, water quality and quantity provision, and habitat etc.—are largely an unfunded mandate on our struggling agricultural community. The costs and risks associated with on-farm innovation and increased ecosystem service provision are beyond the financial and technical wherewithal of many of the state’s predominantly family-run farms. Dedicating funds to climate solutions on working lands is a way to ensure that farmers and ranchers have the technical and financial assistance needed to make an impact.

We are very grateful for your leadership. As a member of the US Climate Alliance and given the state’s diverse agriculture, climate, soils, and water resources Oregon is a critical leader on these issues. Through this legislation, Oregon has the opportunity to take a national leadership role in the effort to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The impacts of this action, therefore, will have reverberating effects and will help shape policy development and implementation of other USCA states.

Thank you again for considering these important steps and helping serve as a model for how to address climate change and ensure a strong future for agriculture.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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