

HB 3090 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY
House Committee On Agriculture and Land Use

Action Date: 04/09/19

Action: Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means by prior reference.
(Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 6-0-1-0

Yeas: 6 - Clem, Helm, McLain, Post, Smith DB, Williams

Exc: 1 - Boshart Davis

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 3/14, 4/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes a beginning farmer and rancher incentive program (Incentive Program). Directs the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to determine participant eligibility criteria, terms, and conditions; fund distribution prioritization; penalties; and the types of incentives that may be provided, including but not limited to loan repayment subsidies, stipends, and scholarships for farming and ranching programs at in-state higher education institutions. Allows ODA to enter into contracts with public or private entities to administer all or parts of the Incentive Program. Establishes the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Incentive Fund (Fund) and continuously appropriates Fund moneys to ODA to carry out the Incentive Program.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Aging farming and ranching workforce and anticipated transfers of agricultural lands
- Capital and land access challenges for beginning farmers and ranchers
- Relationship between student loan debt and capital access
- ODA role in facilitating a robust agricultural workforce
- Agency rulemaking authority versus legislative direction
- Farming and ranching as public service eligible occupations

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Deletes eligibility preference for applicants who commit to producing food for local and regional markets, or commit to using organic practices.

BACKGROUND:

In a 2011 survey of farmers and aspiring farmers conducted by the National Young Farmers' Coalition, the lack of capital, including the lack of access to credit was ranked the top challenge facing beginning farmers. Beginning farmers have difficulty accessing credit through traditional commercial loans because, by definition, they have never owned a farm and often have little experience. The 2013 legislature established the Beginning and Expanding Farmer Loan Program to facilitate loans for farmers and ranchers to finance acquisition of approved agricultural projects.

House Bill 3090 A would establish a beginning farmer and rancher incentive program and fund for the purpose of assisting beginning farmers and ranchers in Oregon.