

December 10, 2021

Co-Chairs Beyer and Fahey, and members of the Joint Interim Committee on The Second Special Session of 2021:

As you know, Oregon's farmers and ranchers have endured multiple natural disasters this year, including extreme heat, drought, and wildfires, which are threatening their viability. Natural disaster relief is urgently needed.

The Governor's office has developed a Drought Relief Package, which includes \$33 million for an Agricultural Forgivable Disaster Loan Program. It also includes \$1.5 million for the Oregon Community Food Systems Network (OCFSN) to establish a Disaster Relief Fund for Farmers. This fund will provide direct financial support, in the form of grants, to small-scale farmers and ranchers impacted by natural disasters who are not able to access federal disaster relief funds and/or the State's Forgivable Disaster Loan Program. I've attached an overview of the OCFSN Disaster Relief Fund for Farmers and Ranchers, which is modeled after the successful [California Family Farmer Emergency Fund](#), a public/private partnership.

This alternative fund is needed because a forgivable loan will not be accessible to some small and BIPOC Producers, the same producers who may not have the resources to weather disaster-related disruptions and often fall between the cracks of traditional safety nets and government aid. The additional alternative structure provided by the OCFSN's Disaster Relief Fund for Farmers will be critical to ensuring that all of Oregon's farmers and ranchers have the opportunity to access timely disaster relief funding provided by the State.

We urge you to support the full Drought Relief Package, including the alternative Disaster Relief Fund for Farmers administered by the Oregon Community Food Systems Network.

This request is supported by the following organizations:

Friends of Family Farmers

High Desert Food & Farm Alliance

Northeast Oregon Economic Development District

Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network

Oregon Community Food Systems Network, Farming for the Future Working Group

Oregon Organic Coalition

OSU Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems

Our Family Farms

Thank you for your consideration and for your service.



Megan Kemple, Director of Policy Advocacy, Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network

Oregon Community Food Systems Network (OCFSN) Disaster Relief Fund for Farmers and Ranchers

Farmers and ranchers around Oregon are suffering from drought conditions, shortages of irrigation water, losing crops due to extreme heat, and dealing with the after effects of wildfires. This puts farmers and ranchers at risk. Despite being the heart of our local and regional food systems, these community-scale entrepreneurs are too often unable to access federal disaster relief funds. This is particularly true for small family farms, Black, Indigenous, Producers Of Color, and those from disadvantaged communities.

Members of the Oregon Community Food System Network (OCFSN) have come together to develop a Disaster Relief Fund for Farmers and Ranchers, modeled after the successful [California Family Farmer Emergency Fund](#), administered by California Alliance with Family Farmers.

This OCFSN Committee currently has representatives from:

- High Desert Food & Farm Alliance
- Our Family Farms
- Northeast Oregon Economic Development District
- Oregon Climate Agriculture Network
- Friends of Family Farmers
- Black Food Fund
- Oregon Community Food System Network, Farming for the Future Working Group
- Oregon Organic Coalition

We will offer direct financial support, in the form of grants, to small-scale farmers impacted by disaster caused by drought, heat, or wildfire who are unable to access federal disaster relief funds, with the aim of helping them weather the storm. A committee of the OCFSN Farming for the Future working group will process, rank, and recommend applications for funding, which will be distributed by Our Family Farms (501c3).

This fund will support small-scale farms unable to access other federal and state disaster relief. Because of systems of inequity and oppression, we recognize that the most vulnerable populations are most likely to fall through the cracks of our traditional safety nets. For this reason, farmers of color, immigrant farmers, and undocumented farmers will receive special consideration, but we encourage all farmers to apply.

Our hope is that a public/private partnership can be established with funds generated through private philanthropic sources, community donations, as well as funding provided by the State of Oregon as a critical part of the proposed Drought Relief Package.

For more information contact:

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