



Friends of Family Farmers ♦ PO Box 751 ♦ Junction City, OR 97448

503-581-7124 ♦ [www.FriendsofFamilyFarmers.org](http://www.FriendsofFamilyFarmers.org)

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Owens and Hartman, and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of HB 3124 on behalf of Friends of Family Farmers (FoFF). FoFF represents over 1600 highly diversified small and midsize farmers across the state who focus on local and regional markets. The components of the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security (BiDRAWS) Package we would especially like to highlight are those that support the continued resilience of the community food system: 4-7 and 4-8.

It is so important that the state prioritizes these community assets when thinking about drought resilience and planning for Oregon's changing water reality. During the informational hearing on the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget bill HB 5002, a representative from the agency stated "*ODA does not receive funding from the state that specifically supports local and regional food systems. Unlike international trade activities that are directly funded by federal dollars, the ODA market access program doesn't receive general funds to support developing, marketing or promoting resilient local food systems.*" This means that the state needs to make a choice to support these diversified, local market farms. When it comes to protecting and safeguarding these farms for the future, no matter the water security situation, we need to intentionally choose to invest in these community assets. This money will not be found elsewhere.

Both of these components were also developed with direct involvement of the communities and organizations they are impacting. They represent the real need for these programs and build on previous successes. Oregon has a thriving community of small farms and local food outlets, these investments will help them weather the changes to our environment and continue to feed their communities.

Component 4-7 creates a separate fund for small farmers to gain drought resilience through the Oregon Community Food Systems Network. The OCFSN has proven its ability to run this kind of program and its members are trusted resources for new, small, and diverse farmers that do not traditionally take advantage of ODA programs. This is distinct from the ODA drought relief and resilience fund because:

- The OCFSN fund prioritized BIPOC farmers and was only open to small farms with under \$300,000 of revenue. Although the ODA program was open to some small farms, the OCFSN program was ONLY for small farms.
- The OCFSN funds are grants, which are more accessible to small farms than the forgivable loans in the ODAP program.
- OCFSN is using a network of trusted organizations to reach farmers who do not see themselves in or have good relationships with ODA programs.



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- OCFSN's application process was less burdensome paperwork wise and involved more one on one attention from the grant administrator, so it was open to more new and first time farmers.

Component 4-8 creates resilience for our community food system sales outlets which will allow them to keep benefiting farmers and feeding communities even in the face of drought related disasters. We need to prioritize our community food systems because:

- Farmers markets are essential businesses and in times of crisis (like the pandemic) when the centralized food system fails they provide safe, reliable access to crucial, nutritionally dense food for our communities.
- Farmers markets have millions of visitors each year and generate an estimated \$60M of sales each year according to OFMA's data.
- Food Hubs and farmers markets can serve as business incubators for small and new farms to help them reach new customers, establish their brand, and grow into reliable sources of local food for their communities.
- Local and community food systems are good for rural economies. Encouraging this type of farming and these outlets supports the farms that, according to a study from OSU, create more jobs per \$1M in sales, put more money directly into the local economy, and generate more economic activity for other local businesses than commodity farms.

I urge you to prioritize these components when considering the package. We appreciate Reps Helm and Owens' consideration and inclusion of local food system stakeholders in the policy creation process.

Sincerely,

Alice Morrison  
Co-Executive Director  
Friends of Family Farmers