

Co-chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water:

My name is Lisa Shaddox and I am a farmer from Bend. I am writing today to support HB 3372. Currently in Oregon it is legal to water a ½ acre garden or use 5,000 gal/day for a non-commercial purpose, but neither of those apply to growing food and farm products for sale. Why is it legal to use the water for personal use, but selling a single zucchini from my garden would mean I was breaking the law?

This personally impacts me because: I am a farmer who grows vegetables, cut flowers, and edible flowers. I sell vegetables thru a local farmstand, and I sell edible flowers and cut flowers to one restaurant, and some florists in Central Oregon. I use a large water storage tank for my irrigation and have water delivered regularly. I have always been very mindful of water usage, and deliberately use low flow drip irrigation and extensive mulch to help keep water usage to a minimum. My growing area is less than a half acre.

I am on the Advisory Board for the High Desert Food and Farm Alliance, so I do feel like I have my finger on the pulse of some of the farming issues we see not only here in Central Oregon, but across the state.

To be able to use water from our own well would be a game changer, as it would allow me to use an even more efficient way to control my irrigation by tapping into my smart watering system that is in use for the non-commercial garden that's already in existence. As of now, I have to utilize a battery timer for my tank, which only works part of the time, requiring me to mostly water manually. I spend a tremendous amount of time moving the hoses and messing with the endless leaks. It's not efficient either in water usage or in time.

Farming is such a critical part of our communities. We must find a way to stop the loss of farms that are providing food locally, especially as new tariffs will cause imported food prices to rise. We are fortunate to have many food-producing farms in Oregon, but we are losing them at a rapid pace. Sensible restrictions on small farms' commercial water usage from a domestic well is one way that we can ensure local food production remains a part of our communities.

We need to be realistic about what we prioritize for water use in our state. Allowing people to grow food or farm products for sale with a gallon restriction on ½ acre will not bankrupt the system, and it seems highly unlikely that opening up this use will cause an influx of folks trying to jump on the bandwagon, so to speak. Farming is much too difficult, and requires a lot of capital. So it's doubtful that we'd all of the sudden see a huge uptick in commercial usage. Please, give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves, pass HB 3372.

Thank you,

Lisa Shaddox
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