

Submitter: Nicole Montesano

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3372

Oregon needs to prioritize local food supply, particularly in an era of increasing food prices and crop-threatening climate change, and one of the most sensible ways to do that is to pass this bill, enabling small farmers to use domestic wells to produce food that feeds their communities. The Oregon Water Resources Department estimates that domestic wells, which comprise 88% of the wells in the state, use just 4% of the groundwater that is pumped out of the ground, for any reason, while large irrigators use 82%. Much of what these large irrigators produce is shipped overseas. This amendment actually decreases the amount of water that can be used daily for either personal gardens or commercial gardens of a half-acre or less, by 2,000 gallons, while protecting small farmers and Oregon's local food supply, both of which are vital resources. Oregon's water rights system is flawed and broken, but fixing it will be complex and time-consuming. In the meantime, passing this bill is a common-sense measure that can be undertaken today. It makes no sense to allow commercial use of domestic wells -- at 5,000 gallons per day -- while excluding farming. Farming is hard work and hard to make a living at; it is extremely unlikely that hordes of people will rush to purchase scarce and expensive land, merely to take advantage of this bill. But existing small farmers and young people with a genuine passion for farming will be able to provide food for their communities. Please pass this bill today.