

Submitter: Ellen Hammond
On Behalf Of: Jefferson County Soil n Water Conservation Distric
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

The Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District urges you to prioritize state investment in sustainable, climate resilient agriculture. This includes funding for Natural Climate Solutions and Food Systems Resilience.

We urge you to include the investment of \$5M for the Natural and Working Lands (NWL) Fund in OWEB's budget, as included in the Governor's recommended budget. The Natural and Working Lands Fund provides incentives and technical support to support adoption of natural climate solutions on Oregon's natural and working lands, including farms and ranches. Farms and ranches are on the front lines of climate change, and the same agricultural practices that mitigate climate change help farms and ranches be more resilient to climate impacts.

Please also fund HB2979, the Food Systems Resilience bill, which provides funding for Oregon's Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grants. These grants are supporting Oregon's small and underserved producers to be more resilient to fire and extreme weather events – funding things like trailers for evacuation, shade cloth, and irrigation efficiency. This funding is a great alternative to traditional disaster relief funding, as it has given farmers the resources to maintain their crops and livestock through disasters, rather than being compensated by the State after they lose them. This is a strategic and responsible use of state funding.

Agriculture drives Jefferson County's economy. Its irrigated lands are valuable; they provide half of the carrot seed planted world-wide, enough to grow a billion carrots. But Jefferson County farms and ranches are being devastated by drought. The 90 square mile North Unit Irrigation District has had to curtail their deliveries by up to 50% in the last 6 years, resulting in up to 40% of the acreage fallowed. This is affecting the ability of farmers to combat the effects of climate change by reducing soil health and being less flexible with their cropping. Also, ranchlands are becoming more susceptible to wildfire. Both Jefferson County farmers and ranchers have benefitted from the NWL Fund and the Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grants.

We urge you to support the inclusion of the \$5M investment in the NWL Fund in OWEB's budget, and to fund HB2979 to support Food Systems Resilience.