

Submitter: Sage Fairman
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

I urge you to renew the state's investment in climate resilient agriculture by funding HB 2979, the Food Systems Resilience bill. HB 2979 provides funding for Oregon's Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grants as well as similar funding for Food Hubs and Farmers Markets.

The Farmer & Rancher Disaster Resilience 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.

I previously worked at the non-profit Adelante Mujeres, supporting farmers and managing the Forest Grove and Cornelius Farmers Markets. I supported farmers in applying for the Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant, and I saw the impact that accessible, community-led grants can have on small, underserved farmers. I also served on the grant review committee in my role at the Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network, and know how the projects truly prepare farmers for climate-related disasters by investing in the resources and equipment they need for their specific operation.

Farmers markets are important gathering spaces and avenues for local producers and food businesses to sell their products. In Forest Grove and Cornelius, over 3,000 families shopped each week for fresh, culturally relevant food and connection. But being a summer market on pavement during the hottest part of the day meant we were vulnerable to climate adversities. We had to cancel entire market days due to heat, smoke, wind, or thunderstorms– impacting over 70 small businesses and disrupting access to food for families.

With the Climate Resilient Farmers Market Grant, we developed a climate resiliency plan, including planning for relocation during extreme weather events to stay operational and increasing vendor training; and purchased necessary equipment for shade and cooling for the safety of market staff, customers, and vendors. These funds make whole communities more resilient to climate change.

Oregon's producers and farmers markets are already adapting to climate change, but

they need resources to keep going. I urge you to fund HB 2979 to build food system resilience in Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration.