

Submitter: Barbara Stevenson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

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 Barbara Stevenson and I am a community member in North Bend, Oregon. I am writing to you today to express my opposition to HB 4153. Farm stands are a vital part of connecting the public with our food system and building an understanding of what it takes to go from field to fork. But HB 4153 would restrict who is allowed to have a farm stand, replace current definitions with Farm Stores, and give large land owners privileges at the expense of small farm stands in Oregon. We need to find a better solution.

I care about this because I frequently go to Valley Flora farm in Langlois, Oregon. While it is approximately an hour from my home, it is my favorite farmstand. I go there to pick strawberries – they simply grow the BEST strawberries I have ever eaten. I make jam from the strawberries I pick; I only make jam from strawberries I have picked myself. I've been picking strawberries at Valley Flora for more than 15 years. I also love their peas – their peas are also the best I have ever eaten. For many years I was a CSA member at Valley Flora; their produce is simply fabulous and the farmers care about the land and the community.

My understanding is that Valley Flora does not meet the acreage requirements in section 2.2 of the bill. Small farms need to have the same opportunities to sell their produce as larger farms. Why should large acreage farmers gain privileges at the expense of smaller acre farmers? In my opinion, large farms should not gain privileges at the expense of small farms. Small farms are not less legitimate as farms than large farms when defining farm use.

Valley Flora and other small farms are important because they care for the environment with their growing practices. They also give back to the community in so many ways, including providing food to our local food cupboards and the free produce fridge at the Coos Bay library.

We don't need large agritourism events at the exclusion of small farms. We need access to fresh, wholesome food. But if you are looking for "agrotourism", Valley Flora participates in the Wild Rivers Coast Food Trail. This is agrotourism at its best – promoting the small, unique purveyors of fine food along the southern coast of Oregon.

We are asking you to not place a higher burden on the smallest farms. This bill takes away opportunities from small land holders and farms in order for larger operations to be able to host more events. This is not a good bargain for Oregon and a better deal must be found.

Thank you,
Barbara Stevenson
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