

Submitter: Scott Thompson
On Behalf Of: Blackberry Bog Farm
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural
Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

My name is Scott Thompson, owner of Blackberry Bog Farm and currently the only permitted Farm Stand in Clatsop County.

I am writing to express my concerns about HB 4153. HB 4153 as written would require us to close our Farm Stand, resulting in the loss of our farm as 65% of our sales come through the Farm Stand.

This bill would effectively eliminate any farm stands/stores in Clatsop County as our farms are NOT NATURALLY MADE UP OF THE KIND OF LAND that would allow us to meet these acreage requirements.

We currently operate 3 farms in Clatsop County. We have grown over the years, and now run a large, complex operation. Presently, we have a thriving farm stand on our 29-acre farm, 9 acres of which is usable as the remainder is designated as wetlands. We do not have room to grow enough fruit and vegetables on that farm to meet our customers' needs and have just recently purchased an abandoned farm. This 133-acre EFU parcel is made up of 40 acres of wonderful soil, while the remaining 93 acres are in woods or alongside a creek, and not able to be utilized for fruit and vegetable crops. This is a farm which has been in production since the 1870's, but given its natural make up will not qualify for a farm store. Our goal in moving to the new location is to allow our community even more access to fresh fruits and vegetables. We plan to grow produce on all 40 of the tillable acres on the new farm, but even with using all of the available "farmable land", we would not meet the new definition because of the 93 acres of hilly woodland. We also cannot put all 40 acres into immediate production as most of them have been abandoned for the last 35 years and it takes time to clear the land and get it back into shape. Our third farm, 24 acres in an area known as Brownsmead, would also not meet the "tract" requirements for a Farm Store, as over half of the land is too wet to farm, even in the summer, as this historical farmland is below sea level.

Under these new requirements we may be forced to close our current farm stand and layoff many or all 15-20 of our employees (many are local teenagers holding their first jobs) as we do not make enough money selling wholesale and through farmers' markets to keep them all employed. The revenue generated by our farm stand makes up over 65% of what we gross during the year. We would also be turning away the thousands of customers who make it a priority to buy locally grown produce and support our farm. The really sad part is that all 3 of these farms have been providing for the community for over 100 years, and these customers would no longer be able to stop by to purchase locally grown produce.

Agritourism aside, limiting how a farm (of any size) sells what they grow does not seem to be in the best interest of farming. Whether it is a permanent "farm store" on

a 100-acre farm or a cute little table at the end of the driveway on a 2-acre farm, these means of selling directly to the public are vital to protecting farming. This bill takes away the opportunity for many farms to forge this essential connection with their communities. Why would the State of Oregon want to make it harder for farms to sell what they grow?

We hope that you will reconsider the draft definition in Section 2(2)(b) that outlines the tract where a farm stand/store is situated. THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF FARMS IN OREGON, AND THIS BILL NEEDS TO WORK FOR ALL FARMERS. We work hard to support our farms, families and communities and this new bill, as the language currently stands, will force us to close our farm stand, keep us from expanding, and in all honesty, will mean an end to the only permitted farm stand in Clatsop County.

Thank you for listening to our concerns. We are happy to answer any questions, provide additional details, or have you come visit our farms.

Sincerely,

Scott Thompson, Owner
Blackberry Bog Farm