



Friends of Family Farmers ♦ PO Box 751 ♦ Junction City, OR 97448

503-581-7124 ♦ www.FriendsofFamilyFarmers.org

Chair Miller, Director Charpilloz-Hanson and Members of the Board,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to talk with you today, I am here as the Co-Executive Director of Friends of Family Farmers. Our group represents over 1600 small and midsize, highly diversified, local market farmers and ranchers across Oregon.

I really appreciate the attention that the Director has paid to local and community food systems in her remarks today and her approach to the future. When we talk about resilience I would like to highlight the small farmer drought and disaster resilience programs currently accepting grant applications through Oregon Community Food Systems Network and the farmers market/food hub drought and disaster resilience grant programs that are opening applications soon through the Food Hub Working Group and Oregon Farmers Market Association. This is an awesome community led program, funded by the state in 2023 and we hope it will serve as a model for future resilience as well. We look forward to telling you more about making this program permanent in 2025.

In 2024 we are keeping an eye on many issues including land and water use but I'll touch on some specific priorities. We are paying very close attention to the Specialty seed and canola discussion regarding the Willamette Valley Protected District. This has been a really robust conversation and there will need to be compromises on both sides, but our focus is to make sure that we maintain our lucrative organic and specialty brassica vegetable seed industries. This is an industry that has been present in the valley for decades, provides viable livelihoods for families farming on small acreages, and is unique to our area (some of these seeds are produced nowhere else in the world). I won't go into specifics here, we have shared them with Jonathan Sandau and the House Ag committee, but we want to stress a cautious and phased in approach to any major changes that includes safeguards and strong compliance tools (like a state run or contracted pinning map) to make sure we do not push past the carrying capacity of brassicas in the valley and endanger seed purity in the future. Once the line is crossed we cannot walk back so we need to have a measured approach.

We are also strong supporters of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program in this coming session. Not only for the conservation benefits Director Hanson listed, but also for the land access opportunities through the conservation easement program within Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. This is also a great place to match with federal funds through USDA's ACEP-ALES program. Keeping land in production and bringing down farmland costs for the next generation of growers is crucial to maintaining the small farm tradition and strength of our community food systems in our state.



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We would also like to say that we are looking for any and all ways to support budget requests for inspectors for the state meat inspection program. At the beginning of the budget process in 2023, ODA requested 4 FTE for inspectors and by the end of that process there was 0 FTE allocated to it. While the department has been getting by through cross-training other inspectors, this is not a viable solution for a program like this where inspectors need to be present for machines to be running. We really would love to see those positions filled through this budget cycle so we can have a strong start to the program to instill confidence in the processors and farmers choosing to run and use these facilities. The beginning of the program and its roll out is our chance to popularize this awesome asset ODA has worked so hard to establish. This is a crucial element to alleviating the bottle neck in our meat processing industry especially for producers like ours who focus their distribution within the borders of our state. Let us know how we can support the department on this topic throughout the budget process.

Thank you,

Alice Morrison
Co-Executive Director of Policy and Development
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