

RE: SB 5555 / Testimony in Support: Restore Funding Levels for OSU Extension, Agricultural and Forest Research Programs, Albert LePage, District 4

April 12, 2021

Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Co-Chairs, Co-Vice Chairs, Members of the Committee:

Oregon farmers grow a lot of things and if they're going to keep being productive, we need to figure out how to deal with drought impacts on farmers -- and the people who depend on them -- for food. And we're already in a moderate drought condition right now in the Eugene area.

Extension has been doing research with farmers in the Willamette Valley, reaching out to them, and asking them to participant with them, too, by using dry land farming techniques.



Here's what they say on their website about the program . . .

"Questions like, 'How are we going to live with lower levels of water?' and, 'What part should each of us play in becoming more sustainable?' will be questions well worth asking. **This is why the OSU Extension Service Small Farms Program, Dry Farming Collaborative, and others like it are so essential to the welfare of our state's agriculture.**"

Also . . . "Along with **providing a place to share best practices, the OSU Small Farms Program hosts various Dry Farming Field Days where participants can see dry-farmed crops in the ground**, do side-by-side taste comparisons of dry farmed and irrigated crops, learn about dry farming management practices that help to conserve soil moisture, as well as talk to soil scientists and experienced dry farmers."

YES, this extension typically has field days to come on out and see what's been growing well, and not so well. But *last year, when people were "going viral," so to speak, this prevented that from happening, so they went virtual!* **They kept the program going even during the pandemic to continue**

to serve both farmers – and gardeners – like me. These programs are REALLY GREAT! *Great information, very practical, and very engaging.* I believe we even had folks from other states join us, too!

My point here is, **Extension translates scientific research into everyday practical language for farmers** and others without a scientific background. With a Master's in Science Education, and as a former teacher, part of my job was to "translate" science into everyday understandable language for students. In other words, I know whereof I speak, and Extension translates "science talk" into that kind of practical information for farmers.

Everything I've been talking about so far is about food and farming, so it's also a no-brainer that the OSU Agricultural Research Station does research important to agriculture. Also, though, the OSU Forest Research Lab, they're obviously working on tree research. AND, what I've already referenced about **drought and water, that impacts forests too. And the wildfires this last year . . . ABSOLUTELY DEVASTATING!** So, **farmers and foresters need the kind of research done to deal with these relatively new impacts to both agriculture and forestry.**



Finally, specifically, **I ask you to support the Statewide Public Services of the OSU Extension Service along with the Agricultural Research Station and the Forest Research Lab by restoring the 2020 funding cuts -- and add even more funding to, at the very least, cover cost increases.** Frankly, given all the "new stuff" out there, all the potential impacts from drought and probable severe impacts from last years wildfires, it would seem that *increased funding like never before seen would be even more appropriate,* would be needed, would be **an excellent and needed investment for the future of agriculture and forests in Oregon.**

Thank you for your serious consideration . . . and efforts . . . in this regard.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Al LePage". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Al LePage, M.Ed. Science, B.S. Biology

Member, Dry Farming Institute*

(*a spin off the OSU Small Farms extension program)

Eugene, Oregon 97405