



April 21, 2021

**Joint Ways & Means, Natural Resources Subcommittee
Co-Chairs Senator Kathleen Taylor and Representative Jeff Reardon**

Re: HB 5502, Oregon Department of Agriculture's Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to express our general support for HB 5502 with amendments, the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Budget for the 2021-2023 biennium.

Agriculture is the state's second largest traded sector, and ODA's services and programs are critical to that success. Oregon's farmers, ranchers and processors compete in a global market and the department's programs are needed to maintain a competitive advantage. The department has a unique dual mission, balancing regulation and promotion of the industry. ODA's regulatory programs protect both consumers and natural resources. Some examples include: food safety, pest and disease control and prevention, and water quality management. The department also promotes economic development and the expansion of market opportunities for Oregon agricultural products. ODA's crop inspection and certification programs are critical for farmers and ranchers to maintain their market access; let alone expand.

ODA is a well-managed, fiscally responsible agency with both general fund support and industry paid fees. We generally support the Governor's proposed budget for the Oregon Department of Agriculture. However, we submit the following specific comments regarding the budget:

- **Water quality (Restoration of Cut Positions, Policy Packages 340, 350 & 360):**
 - We are very concerned about the proposed elimination of the two ag water quality positions (\$444,958) and elimination of and Soil and Water Conservation District position and support (\$317,594). With DEQ ramping up their temperature total maximum daily loads (TMDLs), we must ensure that ODA is adequately resourced to keep up with the significant increase in workload the program will see in the coming years.
 - We also support full funding for the agency's original funding request in Policy Package 340 – Strategic Implementation Areas. Oregon agriculture has made a strong commitment to water quality. Fully funding this

package would add one position and expand focus to additional areas of the state. We are also supportive of the other water programs, Klamath Ag Water Quality Monitoring and Lower Umatilla Groundwater Monitoring and Coordination.

- **State Noxious Weed Program Fund Shift (Restoration of Cut Positions):** We strongly oppose moving the current noxious weed lottery fund positions to a different program funded by other funds. This shift eliminates the Noxious Weed Control program, and our organizations strongly oppose this. Noxious weeds are posing increasing risks to our ecosystems, including urban settings as well as farms and forests, and ODA's program is critical to managing these risks. We cannot afford to eliminate this program.
- **Food Safety Program (Restoration of Positions; Policy Package 450):**
 - We are concerned about the proposed elimination of two Food Safety Management Positions (\$629,706). When paired with the fee increase proposed in SB 33, this would throw the historical agreement for a 50/50 split in the program woefully out of balance, and decrease needed support in the program. We strongly oppose the fee increase, and a decrease in staffing for the program. Food safety fees are paid by dairy farmers, food processors and grocery stores.
 - We also support the continuation of the five federal fund positions contained in Policy Package 450. The Federal Food Safety Modernization Act, has caused a significant increase in the work load of this program, and this federal funding is critical to program implementation.
- **Japanese Beetle Eradication Funding (Policy Package 310):** We support the continued allocation of lottery funds to implement the critical and on-going eradication program to protect our agriculture sector and ecosystems from this invasive pest.
- **State Hemp Program Support (Policy Package 087 & 395, Additional Four Positions):** We support the continuation of the two positions approved in the special session in Policy Package 087, as well as the addition of four more positions in Policy Package 395 for implementation and enforcement of the state hemp plan. We also request the addition of another four positions \$807,534 to ramp up enforcement and ensure there is no leakage outside the program (3 inspectors and 1 case manager). This would bring the program total to 12 positions, all of which would be funded by license dollars and would be entirely other funds.
- **Worker Protection Standard (Policy Package 320):** We support the continuation of the position for education, training and technical assistance for agricultural employers and employees regarding the worker protection standard.

- **Funding for Alternatives to Chlorpyrifos (HB 3249):** We support the allocation of \$1.25 million to the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon State University to fund urgently needed research to identify alternatives to chlorpyrifos. Now that the agency has restricted use of the pesticide, the state should support its agricultural community by funding the research necessary to find viable alternatives to protect our crops and markets.
- **State Meat Inspection (Policy Package 087):** We support the continuation of the positions and costs approved in the 2020 special session into the next biennia to help get the state meat inspection program underway.
- **Wolf compensation (SB 642):** We support funding an additional \$915,000 in general funds to leverage federal funds and respond to the growing demand for the program now that wolves are delisted statewide. The statewide dispersal and subsequent delisting of wolves has led to an increased demand for reimbursements to ranchers to fund nonlethal measures and to compensate for losses due to wolf depredations. A readily available and easily navigated compensation program ensures producer engagement which resulting in a balanced approach to predator control.
- **Predator Control:** Retain APHIS Wildlife Services funding in the base budget. These dollars are leveraged at every level of government to provide crucial depredation support to landowners and communities.

Thank you for your consideration and let us know if you have any questions.

Oregon Farm Bureau
Oregonians for Food and Shelter
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Dairy Farmers' Association
Oregon Association of Nurseries
Oregon Water Resources Congress
Oregon Seed Council
Oregon Wine Council
Oregon Wheat Growers League
Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers
Far West Agribusiness Association
Associated Oregon Hazelnut Industries