



Friends of Family Farmers ♦ PO Box 665 Waltherville, OR 97489

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May 10, 2021

**Testimony Relating to Appropriation from General Fund to Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC)**

Dear Co-Chair Frederick and Co-Chair McLain and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of [Friends of Family Farmers \(FoFF\)](http://www.FriendsofFamilyFarmers.org), a farmer-led non-profit that has advocated for family-scale farmers for over 15 years. Friends of Family Farmers works to build strong local and regional food systems and to ensure family-scale agriculture remains viable in our state today and into the future. FoFF is requesting that you please included funding for [SB 404A](#), the Oregon Organic Action Plan, in the HECC budget, as part of the “Statewides” appropriation. Much of the Oregon Organic Action Plan includes positions at OSU’s Extension Services. Many FoFF farmers are either certified organic or use organic methods, and benefit greatly from Extension Services. FoFF has also long been a part of the Oregon Organic Coalition.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, industrial agriculture channels failed, and we collectively learned the importance of a resilient regional food system. Over the last year, many of Oregon’s small farmers rose to the occasion to feed communities across the state during a time of crisis, ensuring that hungry families still had access to healthy, locally grown food—including many organic farmers. Organic can help Oregon rebuild post-pandemic, while also combatting climate change:

- Organic is the fastest growing sector of the U.S. food industry and consumer demand for organic products has grown exponentially. In 2018, organic sales hit a record breaking \$52.5 billion, representing almost 6% of all food sold in the U.S;
- Oregon is in the [top 10 states](#) by acres of organic cropland in 2019;
- Organic farms hire more people per acre and they work more days of the year;
- When there are two or more counties with organic production, they become [organic hotspots](#) where median household income rises by over \$2000 and poverty decreases by 1.3 percentage points;
- Increased hotspot formation is directly tied to outreach, exactly like the kind provided by OSU Extension, which SB 404-2 seeks to expand;
- Organic agriculture is a bright spot in our economy and provides jobs in rural communities and improves farmers’ incomes;
- These are jobs that can and should be created here in Oregon, rather than relying on imported organic products;
- Organic is good for people and the planet because it reduces exposure to toxic pesticides and conserves water and soil resources. And organic methods aren’t limited to organic farmers—conventional farmers can benefit from employing organic methods even if they don’t seek certification.

Oregon is also one of the world’s best regions to produce vegetable seed. The U.S. organic seed market for crops was worth more than \$460 million in 2015 and is predicted to reach \$5.4 billion by the year 2024. Increasing organic production in Oregon could help efforts for the state to be a leader in organic seed production as well.

We thank you for your consideration and urge your support of the Oregon Organic Action Plan.

*Amy M Wong*

Amy Wong - Policy Director - Friends of Family Farmers