



2/3/2022

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

Re: SB 1532 -2 amendment

Chair Golden and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding SB 1532 and the -2 amendment to change the "organic" specialists being requested to "agricultural" specialists.

The last few years have been devastating to Oregon's agricultural producers, from COVID-19 and market disruptions, to a series of natural disasters including fire, ice, heat, and drought. As Oregon's farmers struggle to adapt to an ongoing pandemic and a changing climate, they have an emergent and critical need for increased research and extension support to assist in these transitions. The ability to meet this need for the ag sector will undoubtedly require new expertise, and significant additional state funding. However, over this same timeframe, Oregon State University has struggled with a \$2 million shortfall, unable to even meet current service levels, which include service to our agricultural sector.

The first priority in the legislature should be to address the University's \$2 million shortfall, and ensure that current service levels can continue. After this, any additional add-ons should align with the University's own priorities, which best reflect service needs and critical issues around the state. We note that this bill is not among OSU's own priorities, and also fails to address the needs of the ag sector as a whole. Any agricultural specialist working within OSU's College of Agricultural Sciences can connect to and serve the clientele of the Center for Small Farms, along with the rest of the ag sector. However, if these positions are limited to just that Center, their capacity to serve all of agriculture in Oregon is significantly limited - to just the clientele of that center, which is a small proportion of the sector.

We would like to encourage the legislature to consistently support the totality of Oregon's agricultural sector, particularly with any funding that might get prioritized for more positions. We are certainly supportive of the addition of agricultural specialists to the University. However, these should be assigned generally to the College of Agricultural Sciences/Oregon State Extension so that this increased capacity is available to serve all farmers - of all sizes and production methods - and can align with the highest priorities within the College. Ensuring that every Oregon farmer has access to support from local research and extension expertise is the best way to achieve the sustainable outcomes we all seek.

We would also like to point out that a market analysis for Oregon's organic sector is already under consideration by the House Committee for Economic Recovery and Prosperity, in HB 4048. Since the goal of this amendment is to expand service beyond just organic, why not expand this market analysis to Oregon's agricultural sector as a whole?

Respectfully,

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