

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1532

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

2/4/2022

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Kennemer and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rhianna Simes, M.S.Ed., I own and operate a small farm called Verdant Phoenix Farm in Phoenix, Oregon.

I am asking for your support for SB 1532, which would expand the Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems by hiring five agricultural extension positions focused on organic practices that will assist Oregon farmers and ranchers, and also will fund an economic assessment of Oregon's organic sector.

I worked for Oregon State University Extension Service for over ten years in Southern Oregon, and we were constantly inundated with requests from organic farmers. **There were many times that we did not have the staffing or capacity to meet these needs in our rural community.** There is growing interest and need for information in our farming community about how to implement organic practices. We want to make sure that farmers have access to the information and help they are requesting. OSU Extension is well respected here, but it needs more staff that are able to support the increased number of organic growers in our region and across the state.

According to OSU's 2021 report *Oregon Agriculture, Food and Fiber: An Economic Analysis*, Oregon's organic industry grew substantially between 2008 and 2019 and while the number of farms decreased, the size of farms increased, with overall organic acreage almost doubling. This means **increase demand for information, education, and technical assistance.** Please help meet the needs of farmers who are working hard to reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides on their land – that helps all of us!

Organic agriculture can be used as an effective economic development tool, especially in rural areas—regardless of if farmers choose to certify all of part of their farms.

Thank you,

Rhianna Simes, M.S.Ed.
Verdant Phoenix Farm
Phoenix, Oregon