

HB 3103: Support Oregon farmers with increased access to information, resources, and tools for water management and conservation

In the face of the more frequent drought and increased water scarcity, it has become increasingly important to improve farmer access to better data, tools, and technical support. Farmers need to be equipped with these resources to support their decision-making and best adapt to water management challenges being experienced throughout Oregon.

In response, ***HB 3103 authorizes funding for new measurement equipment and data tools as well as increased state technical capacity to support farmers in water conservation efforts.*** HB 3103 will:

- Create a robust state-run network of ground-based weather and climate information systems.
- Increase the capacity of Oregon State University (OSU) Agricultural Experiment Station experts to conduct and disseminate research on water management techniques.
- Increase the capacity of OSU Extension Service agents to provide water management technical support to agricultural producers.
- Create a farmer-led learning network with demonstration farms across the state.
- Invest in tools that can help farmers implement irrigation practices that maximize “crop per drop” and reduce costs for fertilizer and water.

Agricultural production is a significant part of Oregon’s economy, producing an economic footprint of \$9 billion annually and supporting 3.6% of the workforce.ⁱ Water is a vital--though increasingly scarce--component of agricultural production. Oregon farmers need access to the best-available data and technical assistance.

Ground-based collection stations and information systems provide producers with data that are important for making water management decisions tailored to local weather conditions, as well as supporting and improving accuracy for satellite-based measurements.

Oregon currently lags behind in administering a robust and reliable network of weather data stations to support agricultural production. For example, Washington has over 220 stations and provides tools to improve efficiency and profitability while minimizing environmental impacts. Washington State University staff maintain measurement quality, complete research and undertake producer outreach.



HB 3103 would provide OSU Extension Specialists additional resources and capacity to expand Oregon’s network of stations, support accuracy assessment for satellite-based systems, and conduct outreach with the agricultural community to share how farmers across Oregon are implementing water conservation practices. These efforts will lower energy costs for Oregon farmers as well as make growers more resilient to drought and reduced water supply availability.

ⁱ Sorte, Bruce, et al. (2021). Oregon agriculture, food, and fiber: an economic analysis. Oregon State University.