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635 Capitol St NE, Salem, OR 97301-2532
503.986.4550 | Oregon.gov/ODA

March 25, 2025

Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature
RE: Oregon Department of Agriculture – March 24, 2025 Question Responses

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) submits this letter in response to questions posed by the Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources during the hearing on March 24, 2025.

Representative Emerson Levy

What Oregon commodities are going to be most impacted by the upcoming tariffs?

Most of the tariff landscape remains in flux, but as of March 2025, retaliatory tariffs from Canada and China are, in effect, targeting a wide range of U.S. agricultural products. Mexico has not yet implemented retaliatory tariffs but has indicated potential action pending decisions expected by the end of March. Two key developments being closely monitored include:

- The April 2nd Retaliatory Tariff Executive Order, which would authorize new U.S. tariffs on any country maintaining tariffs or taxes on U.S. imports.
- A United States Trade Representative (USTR) Section 301 investigation into Chinese-built cargo vessels, which may result in additional trade penalties.

CANADA

Canada has been Oregon's top food and agricultural export market, accounting for roughly 28% of the state's total agriculture export value. Oregon's leading exports to Canada included wine, dairy products (cheese), hazelnuts, grass and clover seed, potatoes, malt extract, and fresh onions. The two countries also share deeply integrated supply chains—many food and ag products move back and forth across the border, meaning tariffs may disrupt exports, inputs, and co-packing arrangements.

- In March 2025, Canada imposed a 25% retaliatory tariff on a range of U.S. food and agricultural products—including dairy, fresh produce, processed foods, and wine—in response to new U.S. tariffs.
- These measures are designed to pressure the U.S. to return to stable trade practices under United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and are already affecting Oregon-based exporters.

CHINA

In 2023, Oregon's top agricultural exports to China included grass seed, hazelnuts, animal fodder (straw), processed fruits, and dried vegetables. In addition, high-value seasonal crops like blueberries and cherries have traditionally had strong demand in China, particularly during the Northwest harvest window. As of March 10, 2025, China has enacted retaliatory tariffs including:

- 10% duties on U.S. soybeans, fruits, dairy products, seafood products, and beef;
- 15% duties on U.S. wheat and corn.

These tariffs compound earlier trade-war measures and effectively close off access to the Chinese market for many Oregon commodities, except for limited, high-value shipments (e.g., premium wine or organics).

MEXICO

In 2023, Mexico represented about 6% of Oregon's total food and agricultural exports by value. Key exports included potatoes and potato flour, fresh apples and pears, dried beans, live trees and shrubs, Christmas trees, and onions.

As of late March 2025, Mexico has not yet implemented retaliatory tariffs but has publicly announced it is preparing responsive measures should the U.S. escalate its tariff regime further. A final decision is expected by the end of March and being monitored closely for impacts to Oregon exporters to Mexico especially those in the fresh produce, tree crop, and nursery sectors.

Senator Lew Fredrick

Request for additional information on Phytophthora austrocedri

In spring 2024, *Phytophthora austrocedri*, a soilborne plant pathogen previously unreported in the U.S., was confirmed at two nurseries in Oregon. This marked the first U.S. detection of a pathogen that poses a potential threat to valuable nursery crops and native conifers within the Cupressaceae family.

ODA, in coordination with USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), responded promptly by initiating containment, testing, and regulatory oversight. These efforts helped define the scope of the outbreak, which—based on site surveys—appears to be both widespread and potentially long-established. USDA APHIS is now considering deregulating *P. austrocedri*, and ODA does not plan to establish a state-level quarantine.

Included with this letter is an outreach handout titled *"Phytophthora austrocedri in Oregon"* (dated November 2024), which provides a summary of current findings, regulatory actions, and resources for stakeholders. The handout also outlines where concerned parties can access Best Management Practices (BMPs) and submit plant samples for testing.

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Phytophthora austrocedri in Oregon

Phytophthora austrocedri, a plant pathogen that affects members of the *Cupressaceae* family, was confirmed in two Oregon nurseries in spring of 2024. These were the first reported confirmations of the pathogen in the United States. *P. austrocedri* was first reported in Argentina in 2007 and subsequently in the United Kingdom in 2012 and is considered established in Scotland and England. In response, the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), in coordination with USDA APHIS PPQ, conducted surveys and testing to determine the scope of the pathogen's presence at these two nurseries. This information guided both mitigation and regulatory responses.

Biology of *P. austrocedri*

P. austrocedri is a slow-growing oomycete (fungal-like) soilborne pathogen that causes root rot and vascular dysfunction in various species of the *Cupressaceae* sometimes leading to tree death. This species is closely related to *P. lateralis and P. syringae,* species which are already present in Oregon.

Symptoms

- Early symptoms may include stunted growth, dull green or yellowish foliage, and a general decline in plant vigor.
- Branch flagging (**Figure 1A**) and/or foliage turning bronze/reddish brown in color (**Figure 1B**); may be single branches or whole plant.
- Lesions and/or cankers (**Figure 2**) may be visible at the base of a branch flag.
- After scraping a lesion, a tongue or flame-shaped orange or brown tissue may be visible (**Figure 3**).

Pathogen Spread

P. austrocedri can spread through multiple pathways, including infected plant material, infested soil, and through water sources. Spread is most likely through human-mediated movement of infested soil or plant material o during pruning activities.

Common Oregon nursery hosts

Based on ODA survey results:

- *Chamaecyparis spp.* (False cypress), including *C. lawsoniana, C. obtusa,* and *C. pisifera*
- *Juniperus spp.*, including *J. chinensis*, *J. horizontalis*, *J. sabina*, *J. scopulorum, J. squamata*, and *J. virginiana*
- *Thuja spp.*, including *T. occidentalis* and *T. plicata*

SUMMARY

- *P. austrocedri*, a new pathogen to the US was detected at two Oregon nurseries in spring of 2024.
- ODA and USDA APHIS PPQ conducted surveys and testing to determine the spread of *P. austrocedri* at these locations.
- The Plant Clinic at OSU is offering testing.
- USDA APHIS PPQ has begun the process to deregulate *P. austrocedri* based on various factors. See page 2 of this flyer for more details.

Figure 1. Symptoms of *P. austrocedri* on *Juniperus chinensis*. A. Branch flagging. **B.** Bronze foliage.

Figure 2. *P. austrocedri* lesion at the base of a branch flag.

Figure 3. Tongue or flame shaped orange or brown tissue (lesion) visible under outer bark.

P. austrocedri Frequently Asked Questions

How did *P. austrocedri* get to Oregon?

The pathway of introduction, or origin source, has not been confirmed. However, it is plausible that it was introduced through infested nursery stock.

What is the regulatory status of *P. austrocedri* in Oregon?

The response in Oregon has been under the authority of USDA APHIS PPQ, as it was considered a pest of quarantine significance. This meant that establishments positive for *P. austrocedri* were placed on regulatory hold and sale of host material was restricted. PPQ and ODA conducted surveys and tested material to determine the spread of the pathogen at known positive locations. Moreover, some level of destruction was required by PPQ. Based on the following findings of fact, PPQ is looking towards de-regulating this pathogen:

- The pathogen was widespread at both locations surveyed.
- Information provided indicates that the pathogen has likely been in Oregon for over 10-years.
- Due to the shipment volumes and patterns of both locations, host material has been shipped widely over many years.

ODA anticipates *P. austrocedri* to be deregulated in 2025. ODA will not establish a quarantine against this pathogen in Oregon, but will encourage industry to be proactive and implement BMPs against *Phytophthora* spp.

If I see suspicious symptoms, what do I do?

Contact the Plant Clinic at Oregon State University (https://bpp.oregonstate.edu/plant-clinic) and specify desired testing for *P. austrocedri* (the sample will not be tested for other pathogens). Please contact the Plant Clinic (extpp@science.oregonstate.edu) for sample submission instructions.

What happens if *P. austrocedri* is found at my nursery?

If the pathogen is detected at your nursery, no regulatory actions will be taken. As with any plant health issue of non-regulatory concern, the ODA encourages taking action to remove infested plant material, review, and implement steps to mitigate *Phytophthora* at your nursery.

What actions are being taken to learn more about *P. austrocedri* in Oregon?

The ODA has funding to survey Oregon nurseries to better understand the potential spread of this novel pathogen within commercial nurseries. Researchers at Oregon State University and USDA ARS (Corvallis) will be conducting host pathogenicity and fungicide trials. As well as refining current *Phytophthora* spp. BMPs. If you are interested in participating in such surveys, please contact the ODA Nursery Program (see at the bottom of this flyer).

Best Management Practices (BMPs) for *P. austrocedri*

As this pathogen is new to the U.S., and has limited known distribution worldwide, there are no species-specific BMPs. However, *Phytophthora* spp. are a well-known group of plant pathogens that infect a variety of plant species. Much work has been done to date on managing *Phytophthora* spp. in nursery systems. Implementing BMPs against *Phytophthora* spp. at large, is the current recommendation.

BMPs for managing *Phytophthora* are available online:

- BMPs for Producing Clean Nursery Stock
- Preventing Phytophthora Infestations in Restoration Nurseries
- Nursery Industry BMPs for Phytophthora ramorum
- Managing Phytophthora: Top 10 Tips for Prevention

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nursery Program
635 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-2532
503.986.4644 | oda.direct/Nursery

Plant Health Program
26755 SW 95th Avenue
Wilsonville, OR 97070
503.986.4620 | oda.direct/PlantHealth

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