



March 4, 2025

Senate Committee Natural Resources and Wildfire

Senator Jeff Golden
900 Court St. NE, S-421
Salem, Oregon 97301

Senator Todd Nash
900 Court St. NE, S-421
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: SB 887-1: Organic Policy Specialist

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

We are writing in support of SB 887-1 to create an Organic Policy Specialist position at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). Through this dedicated role and biennial staffing investment, the state will be better positioned to expand the reach and economic contributions of this segment of agriculture.

This position would be primarily focused on efforts to facilitate the farming, marketing, processing and trade of Oregon organic goods to both domestic and international end users. An Organic Policy Specialist, among other things, can advance data driven analysis and policy reviews that inform the organic trade and helps identify bottlenecks, market opportunities, and shortcomings that currently exist or are on the horizon. While these analyses are often done individually by certified organic farms and businesses, as well as retail and educational partners, there is a lack of an industry-wide focus and aggregation of information – and more importantly, what action needs to be taken to address found shortcomings.

Organic trade, while a prominent economic contributor, does not maintain any checkoff or promotion program, as do many other singular commodities in Oregon. The diversity of organic across many types of commodities does not lend itself to traditional checkoff mechanisms, but it does lend itself to a state Policy Specialist dedicated to organic that can serve as an industry liaison. This position can support the broader industry of organic trade, and in our experience, increasingly non-organic producers seeking regenerative farming techniques.

States such as California, Washington, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are all actively advancing agendas to strengthen their organic segments to excel and gain notoriety. With this Policy Specialist role, Oregon could eclipse other states in it's standing and commerce in organic trade.

This type of investment gives businesses like Organic Valley confidence in our contributions on both the farm-side and operational-side of manufacturing organic dairy in McMinnville, Oregon. In 2024, we provided 23 Oregon dairy farms nearly \$23.7 million and our creamery, which employs 23 individuals, was able to process nearly 60 million pounds of milk from the Pacific Northwest. The expansion on these successes and state investments in staffing specific to organic agriculture would



be a welcome development. For more on Organic Valley, please see the attached 1 pager, titled "About Organic Valley."

Organic Valley strongly supports the establishment of an Organic Policy Specialist position and looks forward to any inquiries or questions from Committee leadership or Committee members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Warthesen". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Adam Warthesen
Vice-President of Government & Industry Affairs