



March 3, 2025

RE: Support for SB 887 -1

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

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Organic Coalition (OOC) to express support for SB 887 -1, which would fund an Organic Policy Specialist at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).

Incorporated in 2008, the Oregon Organic Coalition (OOC) works to promote the growth of Oregon's organic industry and community. By bringing together farmers, businesses, and affiliated organizations, the OOC provides leadership, advocacy, and support to expand the organic sector, while building resilient regional food systems.

Organic food is estimated to currently represent roughly 6% of all consumer expenditures on food in the United States and the organic market is now worth more than \$63 billion annually.

In 2022 the Oregon legislature declared the organic sector one of five "emerging industries" in the state and funded an economic assessment of each of the emerging industries. The organic assessment laid out several opportunities to build economic, agricultural, environmental, and community resilience in Oregon through the organic sector. All of the assessments and their summaries can be [found here](#) on Business Oregon's website.

As highlighted in the organic economic assessment, which was prepared by Highland Economics, growth in organic agriculture has the potential to provide many public benefits related to climate change resiliency, economic development, and public and environmental health. (Highland 178 -179) *Market Analysis, Organic Agriculture & Products*.

According to Kathleen Merrigan, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, and current Executive Director of the Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems, "Expanding organic agriculture is an investment in our future, one that could ultimately produce significant returns. Today's conventional system contains immense hidden costs subsidized by our tax dollars that we can no longer afford. When we account for the true costs of our current farming systems—including health, environmental, social and economic impacts—the value of organic farming is undeniable."

Merrigan goes on to say "Given the climate mitigation and adaptation potential of organic practices, as well as the need to provide farmers and ranchers with technical advice, there should be an organic specialist in every state." Merrigan, K.A., Giraud, E.G. & Greene, C. (2021)

The OOC respectfully urges the legislature to make this investment in one additional position at ODA, which has the potential to be returned to Oregon in myriad ways. This position can work to leverage

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increased agricultural revenue for Oregon producers, as has been seen in states like Pennsylvania and Washington, which continue to make significant on-going investments in their organic sectors.

The Organic Policy Specialist Position at ODA has previously been included in the Governor's Recommended Budget and the OOC was informed that it would have been included again for the next biennium, but for an oversight.

Please pass SB 887 to the Ways and Means Committee at your earliest convenience. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Wong", with a stylized, flowing script.

Amy Wong

Oregon Organic Coalition - Coalition Director