



March 26, 2025

**Testimony before the the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
RE: SB 5502 - Relating to the Financial Administration of the State Department of
Agriculture**

Co Chairs Senator Frederick and Representative Levy, and members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 5502, the 2025-2027 Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) budget.

ABOUT THE OREGON SEED COUNCIL

The Oregon Seed Council is a trade organization that brings together seed farmers, marketers, brokers, researchers, and others involved in the Oregon seed industry from when the seed is planted to when the seed ultimately makes it to the hands of consumers. Through our membership, the Oregon Seed Council represents approximately 1,300 grass, legume, and specialty seed growers in Oregon, and our industry drives employment in many rural areas of the state, employing an estimated 10,000 Oregonians.

ECONOMIC AND MARKET IMPACT OF THE SEED INDUSTRY

In 2022, Oregon grass seed was ranked fifth in agricultural commodities in Oregon, with an estimated \$639,100,000 production value for the year. The Oregon seed industry exports an estimated \$162,824,215 in grass, clover, and forage seeds to 56 countries.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

Agriculture is among the state's largest traded sectors, and ODA's services and programs are essential to a thriving agricultural industry.

Oregon's farmers, ranchers and processors compete in a global market and the department's programs are needed to maintain a competitive advantage. The department has a unique dual mission of balancing regulation and supporting the promotion of the industry. ODA's regulatory programs protect both consumers and Oregon natural resources.

While Oregon's agricultural economy is diverse and many producers utilize different programs, a few that impact Oregon's seed industry include:

- **SEED REGULATORY PROGRAM** - The ODA is responsible for regulating sale and labeling of agricultural and vegetable seed sold, offered for sale, or transported within the state of Oregon. The program is critical for our members and the movement of agricultural seed. The Oregon Seed Council works closely with program staff, who ensure compliance with state and federal seed laws, and provide sampling and testing of seed sold at the retail level. In addition, tests are conducted to ensure proper germination, weed seed content, and other issues of importance to consumers.
- **NOXIOUS WEED PROGRAM** - The ODA Noxious Weed Program protects Oregon's environment and economy by identifying, preventing and managing invasive and harmful plant species. Through its efforts, this program aims to limit the spread of noxious weeds



focusing on education, regulation, and management efforts. In the last year, program staff worked quickly with the Oregon Seed Council on navigating the discovery of Palmer Amaranth, an invasive weed that was identified at two sites in the state. This weed has a prolific nature of seed production. One plant can produce 80,000-600,000 seeds: with a growth rate of 2-3 inches per day, reaching a height of 6-8 feet once mature – but can reach 10 feet or higher. This weed could have a potentially devastating impact on Oregon agriculture. With the swift action through this program and its staff, the weed is now listed on the noxious weed “A” list which will help fight potential establishment of the weed here in Oregon.

- **SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANTS** - The ODA receives grant funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to enhance the competitiveness of Oregon's specialty crops. ODA accepts competitive applications for specialty crop grant funds annually, which greatly help increase economic productivity in the market.
- **DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE** - The ODA has an exceptional team in their market development program. This program supports domestic and international trade assistance programs that provide help to Oregon farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and companies with market development, product development, and marketing. Staff also work collaboratively with industry partners to identify and resolve trade issues by collaborating with state, federal, and international market partners to address barriers that impede movement of sale of Oregon agricultural commodities.
- **COMMODITY COMMISSIONS** - At the request of growers, commodity commissions have been created since 1943. Twenty-two commodity commissions operate with oversight from the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The ODA Director appoints all commissioners and also reviews and authorizes each commission's budget annually. Commodity commissions carry out important decision-making for their individual commodity. Each year, commissioners develop and approve a budget using their commodity's assessments (and other funds that may be available) for projects including non-branded promotion, research, and education.

Beyond these few programmatic highlights, which we will note are not inclusive of all programs and services utilized by our members and the agricultural community at-large, the Oregon Seed Council wishes to highlight the exceptional staff at ODA. Through the leadership of Director Charpilloz Hanson, this department and its incredible staff, provides exemplary customer service to Oregonians.

We encourage the Legislature to support the proposed investment in the ODA budget that helps promote, protect, and serve Oregon's agricultural commodities - an economic driver in the state of Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration of this important agency budget.

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Oregon Seed Council