



February 26, 2015

Joint Ways & Means, Natural Resources Subcommittee  
Co-Chairs, Senator Richard Devlin, Representative Dan Rayfield

Re: HB 5002, Oregon Department of Agriculture Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5002, the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) budget for the 2015-2017 biennium.

Agriculture is the state's second largest trade sector, and ODA's services and programs are critical to that success. 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 dual mission: regulation and promotion. ODA's regulatory programs protect consumers and resources. Some examples include food safety, pest and disease control and prevention, and water quality management. The department also promotes economic development and the expansion of market opportunities for Oregon agricultural products. Much of the crop inspection and certification work is critical for farmers and ranchers to maintain their market access, let alone expand.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture is a well-managed, fiscally responsible agency with both general fund support and industry paid fees. We support the Governor's proposed budget for the Oregon Department of Agriculture. We also submit the following comments regarding the budget:

- (a) **Pesticide Analytical and Response Center (PARC):** PARC was established in 1978 to provide a critical service to the public: coordination and analysis of pesticide incidents and investigations. Given the broad public benefit offered by this program, it should not be funded solely through registration and permit fees. We respectfully request that PARC be shifted back to General Funds.
- (b) **Animal Health:** Recent avian influenza incidents in Oregon underscore the importance of a robust Animal Health program within the Department of Agriculture. These incidents disrupted commerce, not only for Oregon's poultry exporters but also for exports across the country. Due to budget cuts, the department's Animal Health program is not fully funded and has transitioned to a reliance on other funds or fees. Currently, the program is unable to support a full-time veterinarian on the east side. We are concerned that Oregon is not

prepared for an outbreak of disease and request a General Fund match of the proposed fee increase so that Oregon will be able to hire an additional full-time veterinarian.

- (c) **Wolf Compensation Program:** The Governor's budget reduced wolf compensation to \$100,000 for the 2015-2017 biennium. It is important to provide financial assistance to local communities that experience hardship due to the reintroduction of wolves. We ask that this number be increased to \$200,000 as it was budgeted in the 2013-2015 biennium.
- (d) **Laboratory Infrastructure:** The department originally requested funds to update and automate laboratory infrastructure and provide permanent staff. The Lab Services program provides critical chemistry and microbiological testing services to ODA's Food Safety program, Fertilizer and Pesticide Enforcement program, and others. Although HB 5002 includes funding for the automation of lab equipment, it does not include permanent staff. We request additional funds to permanently staff ODA's Laboratory Services program.

Respectfully,



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