



Brooke Rollins  
United States Secretary of Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C.

May 16, 2025

Dear Secretary Rollins,

As representatives of the food and fiber value chain, the undersigned organizations want to express our enthusiasm for working with you and other administration leaders to ensure that America continues to have the safest, most affordable food, feed, and fiber supplies in the world. A strong Department of Agriculture is needed to continue to accomplish this. We write to urge your continued support and full funding for several critical USDA programs that provide essential research, technical assistance, and regulatory support to our industries. Without robust federal investment in these programs, Oregon - and U.S. - producers will face increasing challenges to economic sustainability within a global marketplace.

One such program is **Inter-Regional Project #4 (IR-4)**, funded through USDA-NIFA. IR-4 facilitates the registration of pesticides for minor and specialty crops, supporting the availability of lower-risk products tailored to the 180+ specialty crops grown in Oregon. According to a 2022 University of Michigan economic analysis, IR-4 contributes approximately **\$8.97 billion annually to U.S. GDP<sup>1</sup>**—a remarkable return on the \$15 million in federal funding appropriated by Congress.

The **USDA Office of Pest Management Policy (OPMP)** plays a critical role in representing the interests of major commodity and specialty crop producers in the federal regulatory process, particularly in informing the EPA of the real-world impacts of its pesticide decisions. For the last several years, OPMP has helped to ensure that mitigation measures developed by US EPA for

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.canr.msu.edu/cea/uploads/files/IR4%202022%20Final.pdf>

compliance with the Endangered Species Act are compatible with the distinct practices required for sustainable crop production, including a wide variety of specialty crops.

The **USDA Pesticide Data Program (PDP)** monitors pesticide residues and maintains a trusted national database that underpins both public confidence in food safety and EPA regulatory reviews. PDP data also help maintain export market access by ensuring compliance with international pesticide residue standards and aiding in international marketing of our products.

The **USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS)** supports vital research tailored to Oregon's unique commodities. Oregon has ARS positions across the state that focus on regionally significant crops, including specialty seed production, berry horticulture and breeding, and pest and disease management. The **National Clonal Germplasm Repository (NCGR)** in Oregon maintains germplasm collections that are critical for breeding pest and disease resistant hazelnuts, strawberries, blueberries, caneberries and hops. The **Western Wheat Quality Lab** provides a similar function for wheat genetics. And the **Columbia Plateau Conservation Research Center** engages in critical work on production practices for reducing input usage. However, 26 ARS positions have been eliminated from across Oregon, and the majority have not yet been restored. We urge the full restoration of these roles and continued funding for the ARS programs that support the world-class agricultural research that ARS is known for.

**USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)** plays a vital role in safeguarding plant health through its Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program. In 2024 alone, over 1,800 pests and diseases were intercepted<sup>2</sup>—any of which could have had devastating consequences for Oregon's natural resource sector. APHIS also supports the **National Clean Plant Network**, which provides disease-free planting stock for crops such as blueberries, caneberries, wine grapes, and hops— and which are essential for healthy, sustainable production systems. Finally, **Wildlife Services** leads national efforts to manage wildlife-related problems including disease threats, livestock predation, crop losses, and property damage. These programs and the associated research are essential to ongoing solutions that support coexistence between people, agriculture, and wildlife.

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** offers critical technical assistance and funding for science-based conservation practices. NRCS's on-the-ground support helps Oregon producers reduce erosion and runoff, conserve water, and adopt sustainable production practices. These efforts are also key to ensuring that producers can meet evolving EPA pesticide compliance requirements under the Endangered Species Act.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/aphis-impact-2024.pdf>

Finally, the **US Forest Service** performs crucial work across a range of topics that support fiber production, ranging from research into new uses for wood waste and traditionally low value timber, to wildfire science. Healthy and sustainably managed forests are key to the health and safety of Oregonians as the risks of wildfire continue to increase.

Without continued investment in these key USDA programs, Oregon and U.S. food and fiber producers are at risk of losing access to global markets and the tools and expertise necessary for sustainable, competitive production. They will likely face increased crop losses due to pests and diseases. These programs form the backbone of a science- and risk-based policy framework that supports producers, consumers, and the environment alike. We urge your strong support for full funding and staffing of these critical USDA programs in the upcoming appropriations process.

In addition to the programs prioritized here, we also have concerns with the large numbers of staff who have accepted offers to leave the agency. The success of these programs and the broader mission of USDA hinges on a reliable, dedicated staff. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to partnering with you to ensure a thriving and productive natural resource sector in Oregon and beyond.

**Sincerely,**

Oregonians for Food & Shelter  
Associated Oregon Hazelnut Industries  
Manulife Investment Management Agriculture Services  
Oregon Association of Nurseries  
Oregon Cattlemen's Association  
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association  
Oregon Farm Bureau  
Oregon Forest Industries Council  
Oregon Seed Council  
Oregon Women for Agriculture