



Testimony on HB 5002
Oregon Department of Agriculture
Submitted by the Oregon Winegrowers Association
February 26, 2015

Co-Chairs Devlin and Rayfield, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for allowing the Oregon Winegrowers Association the opportunity to submit testimony on the next biennial budget for the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).

The Oregon Winegrowers Association is the statewide trade group representing Oregon's wineries, vineyards and other business that support our burgeoning wine industry.

Oregon has more than 600 wineries and 950 vineyards that produce 2.7 million cases of wine annually. This drives \$3.35 billion into the Oregon economy each year, while accounting for more than 17,000 direct wine jobs in the state.

We are also proud that wine grape growers last year produced a crop with a total value of \$128 million, making wine grapes the number one fruit crop in Oregon.

The Oregon wine industry and ODA have a strong history of collaboration. We understand the importance of a well-funded ODA, and support its budget priorities.

We are here today, however, to discuss one specific provision in ODA's budget request – an increase in funding for its laboratory where important pesticide testing occurs. Let us give you some context to this recommendation.

An issue that has been very important to the Oregon wine industry for decades but is increasing in significance as vineyard acreage expands is herbicide spray drift onto sensitive grapevines.

Between 2003 and 2012 we saw the number of vineyard acres in the state nearly double to 25,000 acres.

With this accelerated expansion has come more conflict with other agriculture crops, public works crews and adjacent and nearby residential landowners.

Herbicide spray drift damage has become the number one natural resources priority for the wine industry. Over the past year, we have worked collaboratively with ODA and many other stakeholders in the agriculture community on a campaign to eliminate spray drift damage to sensitive crops like grapevines.

Our efforts thus far have focused on education and outreach, and promotion of meaningful neighbor-to-neighbor communications.

We are coming up on a critical time in our growing season - early spring when our grapevines experience bud break. This is the time – through the spring and summer – when our vineyards are highly sensitive to even the lowest levels of damaging pesticides – those in the class of phenoxy herbicides.

While we are committed to this education and outreach campaign, we are here today to underscore that ODA's regulatory laboratory needs additional resources to serve Oregon's agriculture needs.

One important tool to ensure our spray draft campaign is successful is good data about the extent of the spray drift problem. This can only be successful if ODA's testing lab is sufficient to analyze samples and provide feedback in a timely manner.

Once potential damage has occurred, an ODA investigator will take a sample for testing at the state's lab. Often times it takes more than six months to get results back. This process is too long when trying to determine who may have illegally drifted and ensuring it does not happen again.

We understand that ODA is seeking \$1.1 million to enhance its regulatory testing lab. We hope the Ways & Means Committee considers increasing that allocation to at least \$2 million.

We think this enhanced investment will ensure that there is proper equipment, well-trained staff, integrated information systems and staffing resources available to serve agriculture producers in the state that need timely lab work done.

Again we are very grateful for ODA's partnership, especially in the area of our campaign to increase education and communication on spray drift issues.

Increased resources for the ODA's regulatory lab is one piece of this overall effort, and will assist with our collective efforts to ensure that no one in the Oregon farming community is harmed by the misapplication of pesticides.

Thank you for allowing the Oregon Winegrowers Association to make these comments and we are happy to answer any questions.