

March 18, 2020

Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response

Written Testimony by Oregon Seed Association



Co-Chair Roblan, Co-Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer suggestions during this difficult time. We appreciate this committee and your diligence in working to find ways to help Oregon business owners and their employees in this time of a healthcare crisis and where many businesses have closed or have employees working remotely or through delivery and online sales.

The news that this state of emergency may last for months rather than weeks leaves more uncertainty. With this uncertainty comes the possibility that we may see more business closures enacted by the state. In looking at our neighbors who have instigated more business closures than currently seen in Oregon; California has deemed some industries “essential businesses” and therefore exempt from the state closure. If more closures are found to be necessary by Oregon, we strongly ask that agriculture be exempted as an essential business.

As you know Oregon’s Ag industry is very diverse. Our industry is not one that we can easily close as crops continue to grow and must be maintained, animals need to eat and milk and eggs need to continue to be delivered. Our industry is a direct contributor to Oregon school food programs, our state food bank and a main source of forage (animal feed) worldwide.

In Oregon the diversity of our crops includes specialty seeds, sugar beets, wheat, cattle, forage seeds (to grow plants that animals eat), berries, pears, potatoes, eggs, milk, onions, peppermint, cherries, hay and sweet corn to name a few. Our industry is a driving force for the economies in the Willamette Valley and Eastern Oregon. This industry is also a major link in the supply chain of food production for the United States and abroad. As supplies become short we need to keep the productions avenues open. Many processors have already seen an increase in demand due to shortages in other regions of the United States and worldwide. We urge you to follow our neighbor to the south and deem agriculture as an essential business in the face of more business closures.

Please feel free to reach out to us as you work through these difficult decisions.

Thank you,

Phill Lindgren
President of the Board
Oregon Seed Association