



April 21, 2021

State of Oregon  
Senate Committee on Education  
900 Court Street NE Room 453  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Testimony on SB 5502 - Oregon Department of Agriculture budget.  
SB 404-3- Organic agriculture focused education and outreach.**

Dear Ways and Means committee member,

Organic Valley | CROPP Cooperative welcomes the opportunity to provide testimony on the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) budget. In particular, we are interested in provisions provided in SB404-3 which provide ODA with resources to strengthen the organic industry in the state.

Organic Valley | CROPP Cooperative is a marketing cooperative that maintains a strong presence in the Pacific Northwest. We source milk from 33 organic dairy farmers in Oregon and employ up to 50 people at the Organic Valley McMinnville Creamery located in McMinnville, Oregon. We also have valuable co-processor relationships, along with retail sales of our branded organic products and private label and ingredient sales.

The provisions as amended in the Senate Bill 404-3

- enhance Oregon State University extension efforts with additional organic specialists,
- enable a state-wide market and economic analysis of the organic sector, and
- **bolster the state department of agriculture's capacity by providing instruction and resources to establish two new full-time positions: (1) one Organic Policy Special Assistant to the Director of Agriculture and (2) one soil health specialist position.**

The new positions at ODA we believe would be tactical and well received.

As a parallel example, this type of role was established at the federal level where USDA created an organic policy advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture on organic issues. This role improved outreach to organic producers for general farm program offerings and was an avenue to modification of policy mechanisms that reflect the nuances of organic production and data.

Dedication of personnel on organic agriculture has also been put in practice within other states. Wisconsin for example, maintains an organic specialist housed at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. Personnel with a focus on organic has led



to educational trainings, where the agency partnered with industry to convene a series of three workshops for large-animal veterinarians.

The workshops focused on the application and use of organic approved treatments on dairy cattle. In the end 90 veterinarians participated in this continuing education effort that was aimed at helping them better service their organic dairy farm clients. These workshops would never have happened without the organic specialist at the state agency.

While trainings to help organic farmers or those serving organic producers is evident, we also believe there is international trade prospects for organic goods produced in Oregon. Access to global market channels enhanced by shipping terminals not present in other regions gives Oregon an added advantage. The ability of an organic specialist to contribute to state led trade missions by recruiting and supporting organic businesses and producers, can bring a broader swath of Oregon agriculture goods to these exchanges.

The other position, a soil health specialist, outlined in the SB 404-3 has broad appeal and as soil becomes a focal point, as one way to sequester carbon and build more resilient farming systems, this staffing can create returns for Oregon farmers.

These investment in ODA we believe are timely and sets Oregon in a unique class of only a couple states that are being this intentional about growing organic commerce.

We stand ready to support these investments and look forward to working with the Oregon Department of Agriculture and partners in the organic sector to create more prosperity for farmers and businesses in Oregon.

We appreciate the work of state legislature and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions. Please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Warthesen', is positioned above the typed name.

Adam Warthesen  
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