

OREGON LEGISLATURE CLIMATE SMART BRIEFING
House Interim Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
SALEM, OREGON
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2023

Thank you Chair Marsh (Pam) and Vice Chairs Levy (Bobby) and Levy (Emerson) for the opportunity to meet with you and your committee.

I am Jeff Steiner, director of Oregon State University's Global Hemp Innovation Center. Our faculty conduct research and Extension to help farmers and allied industries find the best ways to incorporate hemp into their operations.

Our *Climate-Smart Potatoes from the Pacific Northwest* project that you have asked to learn more about is funded by the USDA's *Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities* program. The USDA is investing through this effort more than \$3.1 billion in 141 projects across the United States. OSU is fortunate to have been able to secure \$50 million in funding to benefit the potato industry and Native American Tribes in Oregon, Idaho, and Washington. This was a once-in-a-lifetime funding opportunity and it is to the credit of our forward looking industry and tribal partners that we were successful in securing this grant.

The purpose of the USDA *Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities* program is to raise awareness and demonstrate ways all kinds of farmers, ranchers, and private landowners, including those on Indian reservations, can implement *Climate-Smart* practices at-scale on their farms and working lands.

What are called *Climate-Smart* practices are not new. These practices that are already being used by farmers include reduced tillage, crop rotations, application of organic amendments, planting cover crops, and nutrient management. However, for farmers producing potatoes, it can be challenging to figure out how to adopt some of these practices for their particular conditions.

The Pacific Northwest already produces more than 57% of the potatoes grown in the United States. Idaho, Washington, and Oregon farmers are already the most productive potato growers in the nation, producing more yield per acre than any others in the country. It is important that when working towards wider use of *Climate-Smart* practices, that potato yields and quality are not reduced. That is where a majority of the USDA funding we have received from our grant will be used to provide financial assistance to our partners to help off-set their risks while learning how to use these practices.

Over the past five months, our team of technical experts and educators from Oregon State University, University of Idaho, Washington State University, the Soil Health Institute, LoCoLab, and 7 Generations have begun working closely with the potato industry processors and growers to develop the tools that will be used to help them choose the *Climate-Smart* strategies that best fit their farming conditions and to estimate the benefits they can expect in return.

We know farmers care deeply for the productivity and long-term sustainability of their farms. Not only because it is the right thing to do, but because consumers also care about the ways their food is produced. By participating in this nation-wide effort, we hope to provide more tools for Pacific Northwest growers and tribes to use to: (1) increase productivity, (2) increase environmental resilience, (3) demonstrate how they can be a part of a national climate solution by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and (4) open new consumer markets for potatoes and other commodities grown in the region.

Thank you for the invitation to meet with you about our *Climate-Smart* project.

Now let me now introduce you to Mr. Greg Harris, General Manager of Farm Operations with Threemile Canyon Farms in Boardman, Oregon and Mr. Shelby Leighton, Business Operations Director with Nez Perce Tribe Enterprises on the Nez Perce Reservation. Their companies are partners in our *Climate-Smart Potatoes from the Pacific Northwest* project. After their comments, we will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

600 Words

Jeffrey Steiner, Director
Global Hemp Innovation Center
Oregon State University