



March 16, 2023

**Joint Ways & Means, Natural Resources Subcommittee
Co-Chairs Senator Michael Dembrow and Representative Khanh Pham
HB 5002 | Oregon Department of Agriculture Budget Bill**

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for HB 5002, the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA's) Budget for the 2023-2025 biennium.

Agriculture is the state's second largest traded sector, and ODA's services and programs are critical to that success. Oregon's farmers, ranchers and processors compete in a global market and the department's programs are needed to maintain a competitive advantage.

The department has a unique dual mission, balancing regulation, and promotion of the industry. ODA's regulatory programs protect both consumers and natural resources. Some examples include food safety, pest and disease control and prevention, and water quality management.

The department also promotes economic development and the expansion of market opportunities for Oregon agricultural products. ODA's commodity inspection and certification programs are critical for farmers and ranchers to maintain their market access; let alone expand.

ODA is a well-managed, fiscally responsible agency that is supported primarily by fees and receives general and lottery funds to support core programs. We generally support the governor's proposed budget for ODA but have a few concerns addressed below:

General Concerns:

- The majority of Policy Option Packages (PoPs) presented in ODA's Agency Recommended Budget were not included in the governor's Recommended Budget. We include below details on those specific PoPs, all of which we consider essential to the Agency's regulatory and promotional programming.

- Holding positions vacant significantly reduces the services and programs of the Agency, and results in a compounded impact with the lack of funding for Agency identified PoPs.
- We advocate strongly for restoration of the predator control pass-through funding for USDA Wildlife Services.

Support for PoPs included in GRB:

- **210 - Food Safety Racial Equity Impact Statement (REIS) Pilot:** We support and advance the State's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan, this package requests one (1) position and resources to conduct an analytical review and develop potential changes to ODA's Food Safety program. The Food Safety program works to prevent the spread of foodborne illness through the inspection and education of food establishments and enforcement of state sanitation laws. This package will examine how ODA's Food Safety program will work with BIPOC and immigrant-owned food establishments to incorporate cultural food practices, address any biases in the regulations, reduce language barriers, and maintain access to safe food.
- **310 - Japanese Beetle Eradication:** We support the continued allocation of funds to implement the critical and on-going eradication program to protect our agriculture sector and ecosystems from this invasive pest. While detections have dropped dramatically, treatment acreage has increased. This package requests a continuation of the program for the next biennium.
- **260 - Avian Influenza Program:** The prevalence of the avian flu remains a critical issue for our members. This package will continue the limited duration position for ongoing work with USDA related to the umbrella cooperative agreement in the Animal Health Program. We continue to stress the importance of education, outreach, and testing for the disease.
- **440 - Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA):** ODA continues to receive federal funds to provide education and training to Oregon's producers covered under the FSMA Produce Safety Program. We support this package as it maintains the federal funds and accompanying five positions.
- We appreciate the funding to continue the Wolf Management Compensation and Proactive Trust Fund and emphasize this program's importance.

PoPs we strongly recommend as enhancements:

Administration/Support Services:

- **110 – North Valley Complex** – Funding is needed to complete the process of having ODA relocate existing labs into this new, state-of-the-art facility. No rent or relocation funds were included in the governor’s budget.
- **120 – Community Engagement and Equity** – We support this important addition of an Agency Equity Officer and a Communications position to support ODA’s inclusive communication objectives.
- **130 – ODA Core Capacity** – We support the foundational investments identified as essential to ensure sufficient resources to provide core capacity.
- **140 – ODA Grants Program** – This program is important to provide a variety of grants, from economic development to technical assistance.

Food Safety, Animal Health, and Consumer Protection

- **220- State Meat Inspection** ODA has been working to establish a state meat inspection program under the USDA program. The program was fully authorized in July of 2022. This is an essential investment in a new program that will grow over time.
- **250 – Meat Processing Infrastructure Grants** - Facilities under ODA or USDA inspection programs must obtain high food safety and animal welfare standards. These grants are a cost share of the capital investments required to increase capacity and support local processing and availability.

Natural Resources and Pesticides Policy Packages

- **320 - Agricultural Water Quality Capacity:** Agricultural non-point source water quality continues to be a priority across Oregon, and our organizations regularly request additional capacity for this program. This package will provide additional capacity to the core functions of ODA's Agricultural Water Quality Program to improve compliance response; enhance collaborative partner efforts; increase education/outreach with agricultural landowners and operators; expand engagement with a range of interest groups and increase capacity to address local and regional water quality issues.
- **340 - Pesticide Safety Capacity:** The ODA Pesticides Program administers the certification and licensing program for all applicators, dealers, and consultants in Oregon as part of a cooperative agreement with the US EPA. Additionally, every pesticide sold or distributed must be registered by ODA, which has increased to over 15,000 products with the increased disinfectants in the market. We support the package request of three (3) staff to provide additional capacity to the core functions of the Pesticide Program. Complex product registrations and updating safety and licensing materials require increased capacity to deliver services in this area.

- **350 – Soil Health Program** - This package transfers the existing position to the general fund to continue the critical work of engaging farmers and ranchers to incorporate healthy soil practices.
- **370 - Pesticide Enforcement Capacity:** During the 2015 session, the ODA Pesticides Program received revenue transfer from OLCC for one additional pesticide investigator and one pesticide case reviewer from the revenue generated by the State for cannabis. We support this package continuing the positions previously funded by OLCC, which helps address the backlog in investigation reviews.
- **375 - Pesticide Analytical and Response Center (PARC) Fund Shift:** The Pesticide Analytical and Response Center (PARC) is a multi-agency and multidisciplinary entity that serves as a single point of contact for anyone who wishes to report a pesticide incident or concern. In 2019, PARC funding was shifted from a split of GF to entirely supported by fees from the Pesticide Program. This fund shift is needed to restore critical GF to this important program.

Plant Protection and Conservation Policy

- **330 - Noxious Weed Grants:** We support this package to provide additional investment to conduct noxious weed projects in the state.
- **365 - Apiary Health Specialist:** Oregon’s agriculture and natural landscape depend on native and managed pollinators to ensure good pollination, leading to better yields, product quality, and healthy ecosystems. Established in ORS 602.020, this position will fulfill the mandated duties to perform inspections of licensed apiaries and educate on pollinator issues and their impacts within the State. This capacity will increase ODA’s supportive contribution to the Oregon Bee Project, of which ODA is a coordinating partner.
- **385 - Aquatic Noxious Weeds Specialist:** Native aquatic plants are critical to supporting Oregon’s climate goals, aquatic wildlife, and salmonid habitats, restoring watersheds and benefiting in-system water quality. The Noxious Weed Program is charged under ORS 569.185 to protect Oregon’s natural resources and agricultural economy by implementing an early detection and rapid response (EDRR) approach for new invasive noxious weeds. We support this package which adds capacity to the Noxious Weed Program to mitigate noxious aquatic weeds that compete and threaten native aquatic plant species.
- **380 - Noxious Weed Fund Shift:** The Noxious Weed Program is currently focused on federally funded projects and unable to address the threats of invasive noxious weeds statewide. Providing general funds will allow existing staff to focus on Oregon priorities such as implementing early detection rapid response (EDRR), biological control of invasive noxious weeds, education and outreach, coordination, technical support/consultation, and administering invasive noxious weed control grants. These activities are priorities identified by ODA and its community partners

in the program's strategic plan. ODA will continue to engage with federal partners to fund local groups and to remain active on national projects.

Thank you for considering the points and concerns above. Please reach out if you have any questions.