



April 27, 2023

State of Oregon
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony – House Bill 5025: Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Higher Education Coordinating Commission for certain biennial expense

Dear Chair Ken Helm and committee members,

Organic Valley | CROPP Cooperative strongly supports the provisions and investment in House Bill 5025 that appropriates resources to especially enhance organic agriculture research and extension assistance by expanding the number of organic specialists at the land grant university.

Our marketing cooperative maintains a strong presence in the Pacific Northwest. We source milk from 26 organic dairy farmers in Oregon and operate 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 in the state.

The provisions in House Bill 5025 enhance Oregon State University (OSU) extension efforts with five additional agricultural extension over the next two budget cycles.

These strategic investments provide businesses like ours confidence in the position we have taken in the state.

Regional variability requires an approach that is localized at land grant universities and builds on the OSU Extension Service framework. For example, research and experiential education with Oregon organic dairy farmers on appropriate high-protein feedstuffs would be of great benefit. It could help reduce dependence on out-of-state feed sources and bolster gains from more regional production. The lack of high-quality feedstuffs for organic dairy has been especially detrimental over the last two years in the western U.S. Organic feed costs have skyrocketed because of international trade disputes, international conflict and variable weather across domestic organic crop growing regions. It has meant that organic feed costs nationally have gone up by as much as 20 percent for corn and as much as 70 percent for protein sources like soybean meal. Local and regional solutions for solving organic feed stuff pressures is necessary for organic dairy to remain viable.

This body of work enabled by House Bill 5025 is much more than an integrated pest management need for organic production. It may encompass crop varietal trials, basic organic standards adoption such as crop rotations and fertility management as well as market facilitation and the related value-added processing needs and storage for organic commodities.

These extension positions also have the added advantage that they can service conventional and organic producers similarly. Some organic practices like cover crops, crop rotations, grazing, and

soil health measures are increasingly of interest for many farmers seeking adaptive and resilient techniques anchored in biological cycles that can help mitigate volatile weather conditions.

These policy measures build on past efforts at the state legislature and demonstrate an understanding that leveraging farm practice knowledge among producers will continue to provide economic and environmental returns for Oregon. Given CROPP Cooperative's reach in 32 states with nearly 1,700 farmer-owners, it is our view that this public investment sets Oregon in a unique class of only a couple states that are being this intentional about growing organic practice adoption on farms.

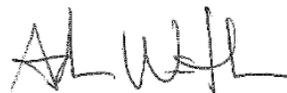
We stand ready to support these investments and look forward to working with the land grant university and state agencies to ensure the agricultural sector creates prosperity for farmers and businesses in Oregon.

We appreciate the work of the committee and welcome the opportunity to respond to questions. Please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



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