



February 16, 2017

## Testimony to Oregon Board of Agriculture Ivan Maluski, Policy Director

Director Taylor, Chair Brentano, Members of the Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Friends of Family Farmers is a non-profit organization advocating for small and mid-sized farmers and family-scale sustainable agriculture in Oregon. We are supporting a number of bills this year that address ongoing needs and challenges, including:

- **HB 2085** – creates a beginning farmer tax credit to encourage landowners to rent or lease land to beginning farmers. Similar to programs in place in Nebraska and Iowa, the proposed tax credit would assist with beginning farmer access to land by creating a new financial incentive for landowners to enter into multi-year leases with beginning farmers and ranchers. The proposal would peg the tax credit at the value of 10% of rent payments, or 15% of the landowner's share of a crop share arrangement. The proposed credit rises by 5% if the land is certified organic or transitional to organic, and could be used for leases to family members if the lease arrangement is part of a formalized farm succession plan.
- **SB 197** – requires the creation of rules to regulate air contaminant emissions from dairy operations consistent with the recommendations of Oregon's Dairy Air Quality Task Force (DAQTF) from 2008. The DAQTF was a multi-stakeholder group appointed by then-Governor Kulongoski and their consensus recommendations called for the adoption of an 'Oregon Dairy Air Emissions Program' - a combination of voluntary and regulatory measures – to begin in 2009. The intent was to 'reduce these air emissions and prevent future problems from arising' and the Task Force described their recommendations as 'an optimal balance between the need to protect air quality and ensure the viability of Oregon's dairies.' However, the program was never created and the proposal for a new 30,000 head dairy near Boardman that would be a significant new source of air emissions has brought the issue to the fore once again.
- **HB 2469** – allows for local regulations of genetically engineered crops to protect farmers whose crops may be at risk of contamination due to a lack of state regulatory oversight. A 2013 bill broadly pre-empted local regulation of all types of seeds and crops, declaring them to be under the 'exclusive regulatory power' of the state. Proponents of the pre-emption in the Legislature argued that the ODA should be able to regulate genetically engineered crops. However, ODA has stated it lacks the authority, and the Oregon Legislature has not clarified the ODA's authority since that time. This bill would create an exemption from the broad pre-emption for GE related ordinances. It stems from a lack of action at the state level to address the need for regulation of genetically engineered crops in some circumstances.
- **HB 2739** – allows farmers who discover the unwanted presence of genetically engineered material on their land to seek damages from the patent-holders of those crops. The recent deregulation of herbicide-tolerant creeping bentgrass despite its spread beyond original planted field boundaries has many farmers concerned. Oregon and Washington growers have also seen high profile contamination incidents with experimental GE wheat and deregulated GE alfalfa

hay. This bill strengthens the ability of farmers to hold GE crop patent-holders financially liable for the damage from unwanted presence of their products.

- **HB 2038** – maintains current funding levels for Oregon’s Farm-to-School program for the 2017-19 biennium. In 2013, the Legislature expanded Oregon’s Farm-to-School program statewide, providing over \$5 million in funding to support schools purchasing Oregon grown and processed food, as well as food and agriculture-based educational programming. The Governor’s Recommended Budget for the 2017-19 biennium contained no funding for Farm-to-School. Despite Oregon’s funding challenges, we believe Farm-to-School continues to be a good investment in both supporting public health and Oregon farmers, ranchers, and food producers.