



## 2017 OREGON LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FRIENDS OF FAMILY FARMERS

Friends of Family Farmers is Oregon's leading advocate for small and mid-sized farmers and ranchers and family-scale sustainable agriculture in Oregon. We are supporting a number of bills in the Oregon Legislature 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. With the average age of farmers in Oregon now at 60 years old, large amounts of land are expected to change hands in coming years. Land prices are rising, competition from out-of-state investors is increasing, and no one is making more farmland. Oregon saw a nearly 24% percent drop in the number of beginning farmers (those in operation fewer than 10 years) between 2007 and 2012, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for young and beginning farmers in Oregon to find farmland they can afford to lease or purchase.

The proposed beginning farmer tax credit in HB 2085, coupled with Oregon's existing beginning farmer loan program (Aggie Bonds) would be an important new tool to help Oregon's next generation of beginning farmers find access to land to start or grow their new farm businesses.

HB 2085 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/HB 3308** – requires the creation of rules to **regulate air contaminant emissions from large 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.

**Oregon's failure to set up a program to regulate air pollution from the largest operations has created an un-level playing field for smaller farms.** According to state economists, Oregon has been losing small and mid-sized dairy farms as larger and larger operations take over the industry. The state has lost roughly 75% of its dairy farms since

2002, when the first ‘mega’ dairy arrived here. Oregon should protect smaller and mid-sized dairy farms, and encourage voluntary measures to protect air quality. But it also needs to stop giving factory-scale operations, often owned by out-of-state companies, a free pass to pollute.

- **HB 2469/SB 1037 – 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 Oregon Department of Agriculture should be the only ones 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.

These bills would once again allow local GE ordinances intended to protect farmers whose crops would be at risk of contamination. They stem 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 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, Farm-to-School continues to be a great investment in supporting public health and Oregon farmers, ranchers, and food producers.

- **SB 805** - prevent cuts to the Oregon State University Public Service Programs (the ‘OSU Statewides’) which support Agricultural Research and Extension programs that benefit Oregon farmers, ranchers and the environment. SB 805 would help ensure that funding increases to these programs approved in 2015 are not lost and that continuing service levels are maintained.

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