



Oregon Women for Agriculture

2016 POSITION STATEMENTS

Agriculture Chemical Regulation

- OWA supports the use of consistent units of measurement in parts per million when reporting chemical levels (natural and artificial) to consumers.
- OWA supports an adequate time period for oral and written comments prior to suspension of any chemical.
- OWA supports a 30 day or less time frame for declaring emergency use clearance of chemicals, especially under Section 18 of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA).
- OWA supports uniform tolerances and application of label registration for similar crops. For example, a fungicide cleared for raspberries should also apply to blackberries or marionberries without additional testing.
- OWA supports the IR-4 Program (Inter-Regional Research Project No. 4). The IR-4 Program is a USDA funded cooperative program among the 50 States whose mission is to assist in obtaining registrations and labels for minor drop uses. Minor crops include all specialty crops such as cucumbers, hops, mint, holly, grass seed, hazelnuts, caneberries, etc. Minor crops have high monetary value to each regions economy. The small volume of chemicals sold for use on some minor crops often does not justify commercial development of label registration.
- EPA should be directed to set requirements for chemicals that are reasonable and realistic at a set fraction of an unsafe exposure. The 10% safety margin for medicine should also apply to pesticides instead of the current 1% safety margin.
- OWA supports continued use of chemicals unless verifiable scientific evidence determines that the risk of a particular chemical outweighs the benefits.

Agricultural Education

One of OWA's primary goals is educating our membership and the public about the importance of agriculture to human survival and well being, to the economy and to the environment.

- OWA supports agricultural education programs such as:
 - Agriculture In The Classroom (AITC)

- Summer Agricultural Institute (teaching teachers about agriculture)
- Ag Fest
- Kids Day for Conservation
- Agricultural organizations and events such as Sigma Alpha Agricultural Sorority, Chamber of Commerce agriculture committees, FFA, & 4-H.
- AND MORE!

Agricultural Labor

Agriculture is a high-labor intensive industry with 80% of our Agricultural products leaving the state. One in eight Oregon jobs are rooted in Agriculture and is an important part of Oregon's economy. The majority of farm labor is done by an operator and/or owners and their family members, yet busy seasons depend on potentially multiple non-family employees.

- OWA supports a guest worker program with a realistic admissions level that will be a legal channel for workers to enter the country.
- OWA opposes legislation which limits individuals' opportunity to choose or participate in any work that will enable them to improve their life and/or the lives of their families.
- OWA supports appropriate due process in Department of Labor investigations of the farm, ranch and forest industries.
- Oregon Women for Agriculture is opposed to a minimum wage that is inconsistent with the federal minimum wage. Oregon Agriculture would not be competitive with the rest of the nation or the global market. Oregon agriculture could be priced out of the market and in turn risk losing current and potential customers.

Agricultural Research

Research is necessary for the continued efficient, economic and environmental operation of agriculture. Per unit of production, research enables agriculture to increase gross productivity and decrease energy investment while reducing losses to pests. The agency for conducting such research is the Agricultural Research Service, which must retain its integrity as a separate service dedicated to research in agriculture. Research priority should be directed to:

- Practices that maintain productivity at elevated efficiency.
- Cultural and chemical control of losses due to weeds, diseases, insects and other pests.
- Conversion of agricultural residues and unmarketable forest species to fuel and chemical raw materials.
- Long term economic viability for rural communities.
- Plant and animal breeding, including the use of biotechnology.

Animal Rights vs. Animal Welfare

“Animal rights” is the belief that animals have the same rights as people and people should not use animals for any purpose. “Animal welfare” is the belief that animals deserve responsible treatment at all times.

It is in the best interest of farmers and ranchers to supply nutritious, high quality, economical and abundant food as well as non-food products to consumers. Farmers and ranchers do this by providing quality care for their animals.

- OWA supports industry participation in the development of any new policy to regulate livestock treatment practices.
- OWA supports the responsible use of animals for medical research.
- OWA supports legislation that would protect farms, ranches, research facilities, educational institutions and animal exhibitors from unlawful or terrorist activities that attempt to restrict or eliminate animal uses.
- OWA supports the right of farmers to protect their records from public scrutiny.
- OWA supports the legalization of horse slaughter plants to guarantee the humane and environmentally-sensitive disposition of aged and infirm horses in the US.
- OWA supports the sale, possession and humane transportation of horses for processing across state and international borders.
- OWA supports the use of standardized best management practices in livestock carcass disposal.
- OWA recognizes all the ways that animals contributes to the quality of everyday life.

Biotechnology

As the simplest, biotechnology is technology based on biology. Biotechnology harnesses cellular and biomolecular processes to develop technologies and products that help improve our lives and the health of our planet. We have used the biological processes of microorganisms for more than 6,000 years to make useful food products, such as bread and cheese, and to preserve dairy products. Today’s agricultural biotechnology includes genetic engineering, a science that allows plant breeders to make precise genetic changes to place beneficial – such as pest resistance, disease resistance or herbicide tolerance – into plants. Currently, more than 13.3 million farmers around the world use agricultural biotechnology to increase yields, prevent damage from insects and pests and reduce farming’s impact on the environment.

- OWA supports continued research using biotechnology and encourages expedient approval of the product which may result.
- OWA supports the position that it is unnecessary, confusing and costly to the consumer to label biotechnological products or processes.

Capital Gains Tax

- OWA supports broadening of the \$250,000/\$500,000 exemption available on the sale of a personal residence to apply to the sale of farmland.

Clean Air

- OWA urges consideration of agriculture's positive contributions to air quality. Through the growth of green renewable crops, farmers, ranchers and foresters help purify the air.
- OWA supports a clean air standard providing an agricultural exemption for dust particulate matter generated as a result of agricultural activities. Any definition including dust as a contaminant must exempt production agriculture.
- OWA supports research efforts to identify agriculture's role in carbon sequestration. Carbon sequestration, the process by which carbon gases are captured and stored, presents potential technological solutions to the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
- Agriculture should not be required to implement practices which have not been proven and which are not economically feasible.

Disposal of Pesticides and Pesticide Containers

- OWA supports current Oregon programs which promote the responsible disposal and recycling of pesticides and their containers.
- OWA supports continued research to reduce the number of pesticide containers such as "disposable" bags that dissolve in the spray mix, etc.

Endangered Species

OWA supports amendments to the Endangered Species Act which will at a minimum,

- Protect property owners from takings by local, state or federal agencies;
- Require sound, verifiable science be used throughout the process;
- Incorporate free market mechanisms and involve the private sector in solving our endangered species problems;
- Require concurrent social and economic impact analysis of endangered species listings and recovery plans;
- Eliminate subjective biological units (subspecies, populations, stocks); and
- Allow for administrative appeal of qualified major decisions and/or judicial review by qualified affected parties.

Invasive Species

OWA does not view all non-native species as invasive, nuisance, noxious, or harmful. The phrase, "invasive species: needs to be defined as a specific set of scientific criteria.

- OWA supports efforts to eradicate invasive species that are likely to cause economic harm to Oregon farmers and ranchers.

Energy

Farming and forestry represent the major renewable resource of stored solar energy. Less than 3% of the energy consumed in the United States is used to produce our food and fiber.

- OWA supports development of energy sources using agricultural products and by-products when economically feasible.
- OWA supports research that will continue to improve the efficiency of fossil fuels and development of additional sources of energy.
- OWA supports the continued use of Oregon tax credits and other incentives to encourage on-farm development of renewable energy.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) & Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

- OWA realizes the need for continued research on environmental management and decisions based on a reasonable margin of safety.
- OWA supports including a panel of producers and qualified scientists working within their area of expertise to advise the Oregon EPA and DEQ and in making environmental decisions.
- OWA supports requirements for chemicals that are reasonable and realistic, at a set fraction of an unsafe exposure. For example, medicine is allowed a 10% safety margin but 1% is common for pesticide application.

Estate Tax

OWA recognizes the contribution of labor made by farm wives and children to the accumulation of an estate.

- OWA supports the elimination of federal and state estate taxes, making it possible for retiring farmers to ensure the next generation of family farms.
- OWA supports legislation that lessens the burden of estate taxes on farmers and ranchers.

Farm Safety

- OWA supports programs which encourage farm safety. These safety measures include:

- Responsible and safe handling of chemicals;
- Safe operation of farm equipment and tractors;
- Keeping crop protection chemicals and materials behind locked doors;
- Use of a specific gear and/or machine speed for correct application of chemicals;
- Knowledge of first aid and CPR procedures;
- Careful handling of irrigation pipe and equipment near power lines;
- Maintenance and upkeep of farm vehicles and machinery
- Educating children about being careful around farm equipment and buildings.

Field Burning

- OWA supports field burning as an efficient, natural management tool to control fungi and diseases; eliminate weeds; remove excess straw; improve soils by recycling the potassium, phosphorus and other minerals from the ash; and to sanitize fields for quality seed and genetic purity.
- OWA supports continued research and development of programs designed to find efficient methods for straw management and/or straw removal.
- OWA expects government to comply with the same standards imposed on citizens and businesses regarding the management of natural resources and wildlife.

Food Safety

As producers of our nation's food supply, farmers/ ranchers are committed to providing the safest, most wholesome, affordable and abundant food in the world.

- OWA encourages more public education about food handling and preparation; which often poses the greatest threat to food safety due to unsafe rots, molds, bacteria and other micro-organisms.
- Responsible use of crop protection chemicals (pesticides) is one of the important tools that have made this abundance and quality possible. OWA supports continued use of crop protection chemicals. OWA supports verifiable, scientific evidence to determine the benefits versus the risks before the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (or any other regulatory agency) takes any precipitous action against their registration or use.

Foreign Trade

The national economy and balance of trade is heavily dependent upon agriculture. It is essential that agriculture be released from barriers and restrictions that inhibit our capacity to produce and market agriculture commodities.

- OWA supports Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) on all imported food products at the final point of sale to consumers. Standards for these imported foods should be the same as required for domestic food products.

- OWA supports the intent of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the on-going discussion for the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT).

Grazing Practices

- OWA supports grazing on public land and fees that are determined by the current formula. Controlled responsible grazing is crucial to maintaining range and wildlife habitat and the viability of range communities.
- OWA supports continued improvement of the range through education and voluntary effort rather than costly regulation.

Land Acquisition

- The state and federal government own over 60% of the land in Oregon. OWA supports the sale of much of this government land to private parties to off-set the deficit and balance budgets.
- OWA supports the monitoring of private, non-profit groups that purchase land with the intent to sell that land to the government for public use.

Land Use

OWA recognizes that a family farm or ranch is a form of business enterprise in which the entrepreneurial decisions are made by individuals engaged in the production of food, feed, fiber, fuel, forest products and/or flora for profit, which provides a major source of income and capital for investment.

- OWA recognizes the critical need to maintain productive farm and forest land. OWA recommends that incentives rather than regulatory actions be implemented to encourage continued use of productive farm and forest land.
- OWA supports the Oregon Constitution which requires governmental bodies to pay “compensation” to landowners or get their consent to “regulatory takings.” These are regulatory actions that overly restrict the use of privately owned property.
- OWA supports a policy of no net loss of taxable private property.
- Land and land uses differ from area to area within counties as well as within regions, OWA supports land use decisions made by the local citizens whose livelihoods are impacted by those plans. These decisions should be consistent with statewide guidelines.
- OWA supports multiple use of natural resources. Those who work daily with soil and water know first-hand that renewable resources are healthiest when used productively.
- OWA objects to public funds supporting easements or buyouts to non-profit groups for conservation projects such as wetlands restoration or wildlife habitat that remove agricultural land from local tax rolls and other local economic activity.

Insurance

- OWA supports legislation that allows associations to offer group health insurance programs to individual members and small businesses.
- OWA supports a health care system that continues to develop and to use paraprofessional programs in rural communities as well as programs to encourage doctors and nurses to locate in rural areas.

Nutrition

- OWA supports emphasis on improved nutrition, which is best accomplished through research and public education.
- OWA supports farm-to-school food programs.

Preemption Laws

- OWA supports the pesticide pre-emption statute that says that all regulation of pesticides can only be done at the state or federal level.
- OWA supports the seed pre-emption statute that says that all regulation of agricultural seeds can only be done at the state or federal level.

Private Property Rights

Private property ownership forms the basis of our free market economic system. This private ownership of land is vital in maintaining a dynamic and healthy environment and economy.

- OWA supports the multiple use of public land with emphasis on stewardship (management/conservation) rather than preservation.
- OWA supports legislation which would require government agencies to consider the impact of their rules and regulations on private property under the “takings” clause of the Oregon and United States constitutions. The legislation would require these agencies to assess the potential *economic* impact of their actions. This is needed as agencies are exerting additional controls on the ownership and use of private property. These controls include:
 - Wetland Regulations
 - Wildlife Habitat
 - Conservation Easements
 - Scenic Views
 - Natural Areas
 - Open Space
 - Historic Sites
 - Land Use Planning
 - Environmental and Endangered Species Restrictions
 - Denial of Water and/or Mineral Rights
 - Other Economic Uses of Property
 - Out Right Taking of Private Property Without Compensation

- OWA supports the monitoring of private, non-profit groups that purchase land with the intent to sell the land to the government for public use.

Railroad Abandonment

- When railroad abandonments occur, OWA supports the return of railroad rights-of-way to adjacent landowners; or where the railroad owns the land outright, the leaseholders should have the first option to purchase the land. Returning this property to the tax rolls would be an added benefit in helping maintain economic vitality for local communities.

Right-to-Farm

- OWA supports current RIGHT-TO-FARM laws. This protects farmers and ranchers from complaints and legal action by neighbors who are irritated with noise, dust, smoke, odor, etc. which are an integral part of producing food and fiber.

Sustainable Agriculture

Oregon Women for Agriculture defines sustainable agriculture as using farm practices and resources that produce safe, high quality food and other products for America and the world, resulting in profitable operations that improve the land and environment for future generations.

- OWA supports flexibility and choices by individuals as opposed to regulatory command and control in making management decisions. Crop decisions are based on specific soil types, climate, in-puts, crop variety and the availability of markets for those crops. Each region in Oregon has specific climatic and soil differences that will affect these decisions.

Water

Water is the basis for all life. Ultimately, all of the water used in agriculture is used by consumers in the products they eat and wear; whether they choose to reside in the city or country.

- OWA recognizes agriculture as a priority user of water to continue producing the public benefits of food, fiber and shelter as opposed to prioritizing water for wildlife, recreational and scenic uses.
- OWA supports existing water rights and opposes additional water user fees.
- OWA supports programs that encourage municipalities and landowners through education, incentives, Soil Conservation Service and local conservation districts, to maintain and improve surface and ground water quality.

- OWA supports the development, construction and maintenance of feasible water storage facilities for the retention of winter rain and run-off. Water storage development, particularly in the Western states, will enable our country to meet increased water demands in the future.
- OWA supports dredging of the Columbia River to increase navigability.
- OWA supports retaining the word “navigable” in the Clean Water Act.
- OWA opposes federal purchase of privately held water rights in cases where the federal government would then hold the water right.

World Hunger and Food for Peace

- OWA supports institutional development assistance, emergency humanitarian assistance and technological aid to alleviate hunger throughout the world. Through shared research and technology, developing countries can be aided in progressing from subsistence agriculture to a self-sustaining system in their own country.

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