



## OREGON WHEAT GROWERS LEAGUE

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# 2024 POLICIES & PRIORITIES

## *DRAFT Proposed to the membership*

### General Guidance to the OWGL Board

The following statements provide general principals which should help guide the development of the League's positions on issues.

#### 1. Regulatory Programs

- a. The OWGL believes regulatory programs affecting agriculture should:
  - i. Provide positive incentives;
  - ii. Not assess fines and penalties on first inspection unless:
    - (1) the violation is serious;
    - (2) clear rules have been provided in a form that is understandable.
  - iii. Have a different schedule of penalties where gross negligence is determined, relative to accidental occurrences which happen in spite of reasonable care and diligence;
  - iv. Provide reasonable education and training to affected parties;
  - v. Promote voluntary compliance.
- b. The OWGL opposes any incentives or regulations which permit or promote third parties filing legal actions and collecting legal fees and costs.

**2. Initiative Petition Reform:** The OWGL generally supports the initiative petition process. The process should include a method to correct oversights, and form and style mistakes before an initiative may be assigned a ballot title. OWGL actively opposes local initiatives that attempt to change or diminish the state pre-emption of agricultural practices, pesticide regulation, or crop selection.

**3. Coordination of Communication:** The OWGL recommends coordination of communication efforts between board members and active volunteers when dealing with the state legislature to establish a lead individual on each issue.

**4. Economic Development:** Oregon Wheat is a top commodity export, resulting in total direct and indirect economic output of more than \$815 million. OWGL supports investments to maximize wheat's economic potential. OWGL encourages maintenance and expansion of transportation infrastructure critical to the support of farming operations. OWGL encourages economic development throughout the state to increase the standard of living and the quality of life for all Oregon residents in a manner that remains compatible with our primary agricultural uses.

**5. Emergencies:** The use of emergency clauses in legislation should be limited to bills that address the consequences of actual man-made or natural disasters. They should not be used to accelerate the implementation of new legislation or to hinder referrals to voters. When used, an emergency clause should require a 2/3rds majority vote of the legislature.

# OWGL 2024 Priorities

## Environment and Regulations

1. Support ensuring that pesticide labels and application regulations are consistent with best practices and available scientific research.
1. Support restoration of full funding for the State's pesticide programs; regulation, reporting, incident response, complaint processing and public information.
2. Support continued implementation, training, and grower education on any new Worker Protection Standards.
3. Oppose efforts to modify State pre-emption of seed/crop choice and pesticide regulation.
4. Oppose efforts to place additional State restrictions or bans on pesticides beyond the EPA labels without clear and convincing scientific evidence that greater restrictions are needed in Oregon.
5. Oppose cancellation of crop protection product labels or uses without a viable alternative.
6. Support acceleration of research and development of environmentally-sound, reduced risk chemistry, economically viable crop protection products in accordance with the goals and purposes of the Food Quality Protection Act. Support federal agencies to use sound science, transparent procedures, and balance in its implementation.
7. Support retention of the Section 18 (c) special local need process.
8. Support Watershed Management Programs.
  - a. Ag Water Quality Management Plans including an adequate monitoring plan.
  - b. Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships.
9. Support engaging in legislative, agency and NAWG carbon and climate discussions in a constructive manner to represent Oregon wheat growers' interests, ensuring proactive practical input to ensure policies are viable for grower adoption and the ongoing economic viability of agriculture.
10. Oppose prescriptive carbon/climate legislation or regulation that has a negative impact on production agriculture's economic viability and/or does not recognize regional or preferential differences in farming practices.
11. Support recognizing agricultural practices scientifically proven as a benefit to the economics of wheat farming and the environment. Support policies being inclusive and flexible to include allowances for regional geographic or preferential differences in farming practices.
12. Support voluntary incentive programs that value and reward the achievements of agriculture in protecting and restoring the environment by rewarding early adopters, along with those taking steps to institute improvements.
13. Support changes in the wildlife damage and compensation programs to make them more effective in managing wildlife populations to reduce damage and to compensate growers when crop damage occurs.
14. Support the protection of a landowner's ability to take emergency action to protect their property from flood events and channel erosion.
15. Support protecting the ability of farmers and their employees to conduct fire prevention, suppression, and control efforts on agricultural and rangelands. Ensure that firefighting entities (federal, state, local) have the maximum ability and authority to coordinate with and utilize farmers and their equipment and resources when fires occur.
16. Support recognition of wheat, volunteer wheat and/or other small grains as a cover crop.
17. Support recognition of the economic and societal benefits of wheat production in land use discussions.

## Labor

1. Monitor and react to proposed changes in labor, wage, and benefit requirements for employers that reduce the competitiveness of Oregon wheat growers in global markets.
2. Support the right of the farm employee to be fairly compensated for their productive work. Support fair compensation to include all benefits provided in return for that work. Recognize the competitive challenges and economic hardships imposed by ag overtime and work on needed improvements. Oppose retroactive back pay or assessment of punitive damages to an employer for past hours already paid.

## **Taxes**

1. Support a reduction in capital gains taxes for properties held long-term.
2. Oppose attempts to reduce the estate tax exemption. Support an increase to the estate tax exemption, to include alignment with federal exemptions as needed and providing for escalation.
3. Support retention of the stepped-up cost basis.
4. Support representation at the state legislature in the event of tax reform strategy to ensure that agriculture interests are treated fairly.
5. Support agricultural exemption to the state Corporate Activity Tax.
6. Oppose imposition of sales taxes.

## **Research & Technology**

1. Support full funding through the state legislature for OSU extension and wheat/barley research.
2. Support state and federal funding for wheat research and extension programs to:
  - a. Maintain and expand staff positions in wheat and barley research programs at ARS and OSU.
  - b. Promptly fill any open positions.
  - c. Invest in equipment and facilities for programs conducting research to benefit Oregon wheat producers.
3. Support increased federal funding for the ARS-Pendleton program and continued funding for current programs.
4. Support increased funding for herbicide resistance weeds research.
5. Support work with university and research partners to accelerate development of suitable quality wheat varieties for all Oregon growing regions and conditions using plant breeding innovation, especially 2-gene Clearfield varieties, varieties with herbicide tolerance traits, and varieties adapted to low-rainfall areas.
6. Support work with university and research partners to accelerate development of weed management control options in chem-fallow systems, especially for herbicide resistant weeds.
7. Support encouraging efficiency in research programs across disciplines to maximize limited resources. Support collaborative work outcomes.
8. Support structures to ensure wheat variety releases are aligned with market expectations and requirements. Support consistency between Oregon and neighboring states on regulatory and inspection issues for certified seed.

## **Farm Policy, Markets, and Transportation**

### **Farm Policy**

1. Support implementation of the Farm Bill. Support preparations for the next Farm Bill to provide an adequate safety net for Oregon's wheat and barley producers.
2. Support a higher statutory reference price for wheat for PLC.
3. Support continued crop insurance premium subsidies, expanded conservation programs, and Title 1 shallow loss programs for growers.
4. Oppose legislative or rulemaking efforts to restrict eligibility for federal crop insurance participation.
5. Support work with RMA to address crop insurance issues from local areas:

- a. Support elimination of APH penalties for events when no crop insurance claim is filed.
  - b. Support a realistic yield mechanism for hail and windshatter damage: allow use of the average yield for the unaffected crop left in the field or, if no crop remains unaffected in the field, allowing that year to be excluded from the APH.
- 9. Align and streamline grower information between FSA and RMA databases for federal program funding.
- 10. Support work with USDA to address disparities in producer assistance programs payment rates.
- 11. Support the elimination of limits on Transition Incentive Program payments when a direct family member is involved.
- 12. Support providing mechanisms to flexibly account for CSP enhancements that utilize new technology developments and/or practices relevant to local conditions.
- 13. Support development of crop insurance supplemental coverage that covers the administrative withdrawal of water (man-made drought) for irrigation that is not triggered by a disaster declaration due to actual drought.
- 14. Support legislation that would require federal agencies to complete an EIS which includes consideration of agricultural and other human water uses, before making administrative withdrawals of water.
- 15. Support recognition of protein as a quality factor and treatment within federal disaster programs and crop insurance.
- 16. Support renewal of WHIP+ with the addition of Quality Loss Adjustment resources.

## **Markets**

- 1. Support the continued donation of US produced commodities to meet food aid distribution needs.
- 2. Support increased funding for overseas marketing programs (MAP and FMD) and maximize allocations of funding for US Wheat Associates.
- 3. Support expansion of OWC marketing programs to emerging markets and sustain existing market access.
- 4. Support continued direct funding for projects through US Wheat Associates and/or Tri-State Wheat Commissions.
- 5. Support trade agreements that provide level footing for, and enhance competitiveness of, Oregon wheat growers.
- 6. Support continued monitoring and enforcement of foreign and domestic compliance with multi-lateral and bi-lateral trade agreements.
- 7. Oppose trade distorting policies that interfere with the export of Oregon wheat.
- 8. Support actions to ensure the non-disruption of grain inspection services.
- 9. Support development of domestic Oregon wheat markets and associated infrastructure.

## **Transportation**

- 1. Support expanded transportation capacity to handle increasing shipments of all types of freight, while improving service and reducing costs for moving grain.
- 2. Support the operation and maintenance of the Columbia and Snake River Navigation System, including all its existing dams, locks, channels, and jetties. Actively engage with the Corps of Engineers, other commodity groups, shipping interests, and tribes in efforts to expand port facilities and barge and lock capacity of the System.
- 3. Support efforts to communicate the benefits of the dams on the Columbia and Snake River System
  - a. With Board approval on a case-by-case basis, provide support for maintaining other dams important to agriculture, irrigation, hydropower, flood control and navigation.
- 4. Support consistency between Oregon and neighboring states on regulatory issues, especially for farm vehicles.

5. Support engaging in Surface Transportation bill processes to advance transportation strategies that ensure the efficient movement of wheat to market.
6. Support retention of weekly container shipping service at the Port of Portland.
7. Oppose regulations that would restrict the movement of agricultural equipment on public roads.
8. Support continued use of the farm endorsement and accessibility of the endorsement.

### **Public Education**

1. Support improvements in public education efforts with scientific information on issues surrounding wheat, agriculture, food, and nutrition.
2. Support development of multi-media material for website and social media, as well as expanded social media/communications programs for growers and the urban public.

### **Miscellaneous**

1. Support options to reduce the cost of health care for farmers, farm families, and employees, especially in rural areas. Support increased access to mental health resources. Support extending the use of telehealth services as an option.
2. Support increased investment to essential communications networks, including accessible and affordable rural broadband and cell service.
3. Support the rights of farmers to maintain and repair their own equipment.