

September 17, 2020

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Erik Andersson

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Oregon Board of Agriculture
635 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Hallock and Board Members:

As the regional economic development organization serving Oregon's Mid-Willamette Valley, SEDCOR focuses our efforts on traded sector companies seeking to grow, expand, or locate in our region. Seated in the heart of one of the nation's richest and diverse agricultural regions, SEDCOR recognizes that our natural resource base is the heart of an economy that includes food processing, advanced manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, technology, and tourism. That recognition, along with the public's renewed interest in food security and supply chains brought on in part by the COVID pandemic, have strengthened SEDCOR's commitment to supporting agriculture and businesses that add value to what we grow and harvest in the region.

While it is recognized that Board action on Resolution 310 has been delayed in the past, we believe there is still specific work that needs to be prioritized before action does take place. The Board has advised that a "comprehensive evaluation and analysis, including an analysis of the cumulative impacts to agriculture operation" be performed, which to my knowledge has not been done. Ideally, the Oregon Department of Agriculture would work in conjunction with other stakeholder agencies, including Travel Oregon and Business Oregon, to research other states' agritourism policies to learn best practices. Both North Carolina and Colorado are frequently mentioned as states with comprehensive policies.

One of the challenges the agritourism faces in Oregon that while there are individual staff or programs that will provide assistance, there is no one state entity that is responsible for its support. Relevant rules and regulations are scattered around several different agencies, which provides greater challenges for agriculture businesses investigating opportunities in agritourism. A comprehensive evaluation and analysis, coupled with best practices research, should include recommendations as to a mechanism for ongoing state support of farmers, growers and processors operating in the agritourism space.

The last few months have seen unprecedented challenges to our region's growers, from the NORPAC bankruptcy to the COVID pandemic and, most recently, wildfires. As SEDCOR has worked with the region's growers impacted by changing market conditions, one of the messages we often hear is the need for diversified revenue streams. Agritourism is but one opportunity that farmers and growers have for income diversification. Limiting revenue diversification opportunities at this time may be considered an additional burden to many in the industry.

We also recognize that there is a need to help Oregon growers tell their stories better to more effectively differentiate them from the large, corporate farms seen on national and international scales. Which is why supporting agriculture has become an important component of SEDCOR's work, to help the growers tell their stories, and to share what is required to run a successful operation with the larger population.

The Governor's Regional Solutions Advisory Board has also highlighted agritourism as one of its main areas of focus, supporting economic growth opportunities around the region. Whether it is fruit pies, roasted hazelnuts, fine wines or bread, SEDCOR believes that people want to know where their food and drink comes from, and to experience firsthand the care and passion with which it is produced.

There is additional work to be done before Resolution 310 is fully implemented, and SEDCOR is pleased to volunteer staff time to help support further evaluation and analysis of agritourism in the Mid-Willamette Valley and research into best practices for state agritourism programs around the country.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik Andersson', written in a cursive style.

Erik Andersson
President
SEDCOR