

TO: State Board of Agriculture

FROM: Oregon Wheat Growers League

RE: Crop Update and 2024 Legislative Session

January 17, 2024

Board of Agriculture,

The Oregon Wheat Growers League is a nonprofit trade association supporting our state's grain producers comprised of roughly 2,000 farms. We thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments to the Board of Agriculture to provide an update on wheat crop production and share our legislative priorities for the 2024 session.

Oregon wheat producers encountered several challenges in 2023: from declines in yields (despite making ongoing investments in sustainable production methods), to dealing with an increasingly complex regulatory environment. Drought and weather fluctuations negatively affected yields, with those impacts varying greatly depending on the location of a farm within the state. All wheat farmers, though, faced significant reductions in market prices. We continue to experience immense volatility in the market and a price for wheat that does not match the costs of production. Soft white cash price went from \$12 per bushel in May 2022 to a current price of roughly \$6.40 per bushel. Considering the escalation of input costs, the strain on our family farms is apparent.

As we approach the 2024 legislative session, our priorities focus on support for legislation that would provide additional tools for our Oregon wheat farmers and opposition to any new regulations that pose harm to the agricultural industry. As the full set of bills is not yet released, we cannot provide positions on specific pieces of legislation. However, in the areas Oregon Wheat Growers League have been working over the past year in advance of session, we provide the following priorities:

- Safeguarding our farmland from being further sidelined in production in land use decisions— a critical aspect of the OWGL's commitment to protect agricultural land.
- Using a science-based approach to assess crop traits.
- Opposing proposals that increase the cost of our inputs and/or further restrict their access.
- Addressing impacts from external factors, such as elk damage.
- Enhancing market access by improving our international competitiveness and increasing opportunities for domestic milling capacity.

As our wheat producers continue to adopt new and innovative technology and processes for improving soil health and reducing their crop inputs such as fuel and fertilizer, they also grapple with the complexities of ever-evolving policies that impact their operations. Amidst these challenges, the Oregon Wheat Growers League remains dedicated supporting our producers, ensuring they can consistently deliver high-quality wheat to market. We appreciate the attentiveness of the Oregon Department of Agriculture in considering policies and approaches that support our wheat producers throughout the state.