



The Department of Agriculture Agency History

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1 Introduction

The Department of Agriculture (ODA) provides leadership, service, and regulatory functions for food production and processing in Oregon. Its mission has been expanded to provide food safety and consumer protection at all levels of production and marketing, to protect the agricultural natural resource base, and to promote economic development and develop markets for agriculture and food products. The Director of the Department of Agriculture is appointed by the Governor. A ten-member State Board of Agriculture, also appointed by the Governor, serves as an advisory board to the Director. The Department is currently divided into ten divisions that oversee thirty-six chapters of Oregon laws.

2 Historical Narrative

Agriculture is a leading industry in Oregon with over 200 commodities produced. There are at least seven distinct growing areas ranging from dairies along the Oregon Coast to the large dry land wheat farms of the Columbia Basin from the rich soils of the Willamette Valley to the wide open range land of Southeastern Oregon. The history of agriculture in Oregon dates to the native and early inhabitants of the region. The availability of plentiful agricultural land was a primary reason for the Westward migration in the United States. Early settlers to Oregon began agricultural endeavors soon after their arrival raising grain, fruit, and vegetable crops as well as livestock.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture was created by an act of the 1931 Legislature (OL 1931, Chapter 136) in order to merge the 17 scattered boards and commissions serving the agriculture industry. Supervision and coordination of all agricultural law enforcement was placed

in the hands of a Director of Agriculture appointed by the Governor. Policy formulation was placed with the seven member (now ten member) Board of Agriculture with the Director serving as an ex-officio member.

The Department was initially organized into 6 Divisions (Administration, Plant Industry, Animal Industry, Food and Dairy, Market Enforcement, and Grain Inspection) which later split into the present 10 Divisions. With the approval of the Governor, the Director appointed Administrators for the Divisions.

During the first decade of operation, the Department revised its jurisdictional district plan, centralized licensing, merged the Market Enforcement Division with Plant Industries, and merged the Weights and Measures Division with Food and Dairy.

The years between 1935 and 1950 also saw growth and increased definition in the Department's responsibilities in consumer product arena and the creation of commodity commissions to better market Oregon's products to local and national consumers. The 1941 Oregon Food Act (later significantly amended in 1956) was responsible for regulating and controlling food products intended for human consumption. Food labeling, sanitation standards and the Department's role in inspection and the issuance of penalties were defined for the first time (OL 1941, Chapter 326).

The early commodity commissions were the Oregon Dairy Products Commission (1943), the Wheat Commission (1947), and the Potato Commission (1949). Other commissions would be added at the rate of two or three a decade representing an increasing number of the major production crops in Oregon, including grasses, berries, and fruit.

In 1955 a new division, the Market Development Division, was created (OL 1955, Chapter 572). This division was responsible for developing a market for Oregon farm and food products both in state and in out of state markets.

Early efforts of trying to identify and control animal and plant disease were seen in 1957 when virus-free nursery stock, and brucellosis eradication projects began. These projects were undertaken to preserve the integrity of Oregon commodities and to better enable marketing of the commodities outside of Oregon.

In 1961 the Director assumed direct supervision over the grain inspection and agricultural development divisions and two assistant directors were appointed. One assistant director supervised the management of divisions related to consumer and trade services and the other assistant director had responsibility for livestock related divisions. By 1967, another assistant director was hired to oversee the administrative services division.

In 1969, the County Fair Commission was established (OL 1969, Chapter 298) and charged with evaluating each of Oregon's thirty-six county fairs under a merit-rating program. Based on that rating, the Commission disburses a portion of the state's share of funds from the County Fair Account to each fair.

The 1970's saw significant growth of commodity commissions, including the first commission addressing a crop not grown on land: the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission (1977). 1977 also brought the creation of the State Fair Advisory Committee (OL 1977, Chapter 55). The first Oregon State Fair was held in 1861 near Oregon City but 1977 marked the first year the Department of Agriculture had a formalized role in the State Fair as an oversight entity to the State Fairgrounds in Salem.

In 1981 the Soil and Water Conservation Division was created (OL 1981, Chapter 92) and later became the Natural Resources Division in 1989. Animal Health and Livestock Identification Divisions merged in the late 1980's as well.

The Oregon Raspberry & Blackberry Commission (ORBC) was also established in 1981. At that time the commission was called the Oregon Caneberry Commission. After years of struggling with public confusion over the term caneberry, the commission changed its name in 1992. Caneberries are berries that grow on a cane, such as raspberries, blackberries, marionberries, and boysenberries.

1984 realized the creation of the Wine Advisory Board (OL 1983, Chapter 651) to assist in the marketing and research efforts for Oregon's growing wine industry. In the 1950's and 1960's the first Oregon vineyards were established. Since that time the reputation of Oregon wines has grown so meteorically that the state now has 120 bonded wineries and over 7,500 acres of wine grapes.

The mid 1980's marked the beginnings of a hallmark time for Oregon producers who wanted to ship agricultural products to the Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese markets. The Department's Export Service Center (ESC) Laboratory began receiving certification by the nations to operate as a customs laboratory. Such certification was very rare and due to the stringent standards that had to be met, Oregon products with ESC certification were now able to pass through customs directly to the purchaser with greater ease.

In 1993 Senate Bill 1010 (OL 1993, Chapter 567) designated the Department of Agriculture (ODA) to be the lead state agency working with agriculture to address non point source water pollution. SB 1010 was a response to the federal Clean Water Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, and other natural resource conservation mandates including listings of plants and animals under the federal Endangered Species Act. 1993 also brought the Shellfish Inspection program to the Department of Agriculture Food Safety Division from the Department of Human Resources Health Division.

1996 was the year that motor fuel octane testing was introduced by the Measurements and Standards Division to ensure that consumers are getting the correct octane levels at the gas pump. This function was added as a result of Senate Bill 414 (OL 1996, Chapter 310) that established standards for motor fuel quality.

Winter 1996 brought severe flooding in areas of Western Oregon with Salem being no exception. In February 1996 Mill Creek flooded the Department of Agriculture building. Eight feet of floodwater destroyed the offices and many records that were in the basement of the

building. The Department of Agriculture moved into a renovated building at the same location in October of 1998.

In 1997 the Pesticides Division was created. The pesticide area had formerly been a program area within the Plant Division.

3 Current Organization

The following entities make up the organization of the Department of Agriculture as of July 1999:

Administration

Administration is responsible for implementing the policies of the State Board of Agriculture; administering the internal and external planning and initiatives of the Department working toward and encouraging long range planning to develop and promote agriculture resources in the state; tracking, monitoring, and developing legislation; acting as liaison to the governor and Legislative Assembly; participating in various groups and committees relating to agriculture issues; and making numerous public appearances and presentations representing Oregon agriculture to consumer and industry groups nationally and internationally.

The State Board of Agriculture advises the Oregon Department of Agriculture on policy issues and development of rules. Oregon's Governor appoints nine of the board members; the chair of Oregon's Soil and Water Conservation Commission serves as the tenth member. Board members serve four-year terms and a maximum of two terms.

The Director serves as an ex-officio member on the over 25 agricultural commodity commissions and provides guidance and direction to 47 soil and water conservation districts in Oregon.

The Wine Advisory Board, technically not a commodity commission, is addressed by the Administration area as well.

Administrative Services

The Administration Services Division provides support services to assist the Divisions in carrying out their programs. Business, personnel, and computer-related functions are all handled within this Division. Licensing is also a significant part of this area. The Oregon Department of Agriculture currently issues over 80 licenses addressing all facets of agriculture production and commerce.

Agricultural Development and Marketing Division (ADMD)

The Agricultural Development and Marketing Division (ADMD) identifies market opportunities for Oregon agricultural producers in key international markets. Their goal is to help Oregon businesses cultivate a sustainable, profitable economy through product and market development of high-value and value-added food and agricultural products.

Consultations with Oregon firms and coordination of contacts between Oregon producers and domestic and international buyers as well as manages federal export assistance funds for Oregon firms are major facets of this Division's work. Promotional activities such as trade missions and shows, the organization of promotions for Oregon products, and hosting foreign trade delegations are also performed.

ADMD also provides legislated oversight to Oregon's Commodity Commissions under ORS 576. The commodity commissions are funded by assessments made on the producers of the commodities.

The members of agricultural commodity commissions are appointed by the Director of the Department of Agriculture upon recommendations made by the industries they represent. Each individual commission has the authority to hire its own employees or contract with others to handle administrative duties. Seven commissions elect their members as a result of a 1986 amendment that permits this optional method. Each of these must hold an election each year for the terms that expire. Ex officio members of each commission are the Director of the Department of Agriculture and the dean of the School of Agriculture at Oregon State University. In addition, each of the 3 seafood commissions has an ex-officio member representing the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Commodity Inspection Division

The Commodity Inspection Division's mission is to provide analytical services for Food Safety, Plant, and Agricultural Marketing and Development Divisions as well as other government agencies; and manage the export certification programs.

Graders, inspectors, and support staff oversee self-supported systems of examining and grading fresh fruits, nuts, and vegetables to ensure uniform quality produce for Oregon's consumers. The Division also provides grading services for the grain industry and seed inspection for the grass seed industry to ensure proper product labeling.

Primary activities of the Division include sampling and grading grain, produce and seed, and hops; licensing and auditing grain storage facilities; licensing produce and seed dealers; preparing phytosanitary certificates for seed sales and shipment; developing controls for noxious weeds; administering county weed control assistance grants; and registering beekeepers and apiary brands. Eight shipping point districts around the state sample, inspect, and grade fruits, vegetables, and nuts for the fresh market as required by Oregon law, federal marketing orders, and by industry request.

Food Safety Division

The mission of the Food Safety Division is to make sure consumers receive safe, wholesome and properly labeled food. This area licenses and inspects all facets of the food distribution system, except restaurants - from dairy farms to food processors and retail grocery stores. As a result of 1993 legislative action, the division's programs now include shellfish inspection.

Another function is to assist in educating small businesses about labeling and overall food quality concerns, including complying with the federal Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1990 which required major changes in food labeling.

This Division works closely with the industries they govern (Dairy, Shellfish, and Food) through advisory committees which address changes in legislation and industry operations.

Laboratory Services Division

The Laboratory Services Division provides specialists in the fields of microbiology, inorganic chemistry, and organic chemistry for testing foods, feeds, fertilizers and limited environmental samples. Duties include providing analytical support and technical advice to the Department of Agriculture (ODA) and other governmental agencies involved in food safety, disease detection, and food marketing. This area also analyzes clinical samples for pesticide residues for the Pesticide Analytical and Response Center (PARC).

The Export Service Center (ESC) laboratory can certify value-added food products prior to overseas shipment to make exporting easier. ESC laboratory staff analyze US foods destined for foreign markets. Destination country standards (concerning pesticide residues, food additives, etc.) and testing protocols are used and usually replace required customs testing. The ESC lab has been certified by Korea, Taiwan, and Japan for customs laboratory status that means ESC certified products can enter those countries without customs inspections.

Animal Health and Identification Division

The Animal Health and Identification Division's mission is to deter livestock theft by recording and inspecting cattle and horses for ownership; educate ranchers, law enforcement officials and livestock owners about livestock theft prevention; and to prevent, control or eradicate livestock diseases.

The Division provides oversight through the State Veterinarian for a variety of programs to enhance animal health and to prevent, control, and eradicate animal, avian, and aquaculture disease, per ORS 596. Program responsibilities include epizootological investigations and control of disease outbreaks, liaison with veterinarians and related organizations, implementation and compliance with state laws and regulations concerning animal importation, disease control and proper maintenance of animals, and public relations with animal interest groups.

The staff also educates livestock owners and law enforcement officials about theft prevention and ODA's brand inspectors around the state check to ensure proper ownership when livestock are sold or transported. Branding animals is not mandatory in Oregon, but is encouraged for theft deterrence and tracking of stolen or missing livestock. The Livestock Registration program of this Division registers cattle and horse brands as well as cervid markings.

A primary activity of the Division is the verification of ownership of cattle and horses sold at auction, before slaughter and before shipment out of state; and the monitoring of cattle movements in and out of Oregon through a system that requires importers to have permits and

health certificates. Also central to the Division's mission is the inspection of cattle whenever ownership changes, the investigation of disease outbreaks (the Department has authority to test, treat, destroy, or quarantine livestock and to destroy or disinfect equipment or feed), and the inspection and licensing of auction yards.

There are field veterinarians and brand inspectors stationed throughout the state. Private veterinarians are also contracted with to act on behalf of the Department to help pinpoint and control dangerous animal diseases. Field personnel investigate complaints against animal shelters and pet shops relating to unsanitary conditions and suspected animal abuse or neglect, monitor retail establishment to ensure sale of licensed products and feed, track down owners of stray livestock, and inspect auction yards for sanitation.

Measurement Standards Division

The Division assures consumers that the weight or measure of food and non-food products, services, or commodities purchased in Oregon is accurate. They check the quantity labeling on packages, investigate consumer complaints, and annually inspect scales, gas pumps, meters, and devices throughout the state. Measurement calibrations are also provided to businesses and other users of standards - ranging from Oregon's lottery balls to the electronics and biotechnological industries, and from railcar manufacturing to the aerospace industry.

The Measurement Standards Division has field staff as well as a metrologist and support staff based in Salem. Activities of the Standards Laboratory (in Salem) metrologist includes calibration and certification of physical standards of mass, volume and length for public agencies, schools, laboratories, and industry; coordination of the recently acquired railroad track scale program; calibration of railroad test cars on official Oregon master railroad track scale; and the conducting of type approval testing of new devices. Field specialists coordinate inspection and testing of supermarket scales, diesel and kerosene pumps; hardware, feed, seed, motor truck, and livestock scales; loading rack and pipeline terminal petroleum meters; meat, candy, produce and delicatessen scales; and cannery and fish-buying scales.

Other activities include the inspection and testing of auction market scales and export facility weighing systems, investigation of supermarket unit pricing complaints; and verification of firewood, bark dust, and bulk produce.

Natural Resources Division

The Natural Resources Division's mission is to conserve, protect, and develop natural resources on public and private lands for present and future generations of farmers, ranchers, and commercial fishermen.

The Natural Resources Division administers a variety of natural resource programs, coordinates the conservation efforts of the state Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and provides administrative oversight and financial support to Oregon's 45 soil and water conservation districts.

A long-standing function of the Division includes helping soil and water conservation districts repair and maintain fragile watersheds and riparian zones. To help fund the projects, conservation planning and implementation grants are distributed to the districts. The Division also oversees grant distribution of the Governor's Watershed Enhancement Board (channeled from the state lottery).

Other programs in the Division include the Confined Animal Feed Program (CAFO) which addresses animal waste runoff in Oregon waterways, Smoke Management which monitors the practices of field burning, Oyster Leasing which regulates the leasing of public lands for commercial oyster cultivation, Land Use which addresses the shrinking amount of agricultural lands in the state due to growth, Plant Conservation (a partnership with Oregon State University) which monitors the endangered and threatened plant species in Oregon, and programs devoted to water quality and water quantity.

Pesticides Division

The mission of the Pesticides Division is to protect people and the environment from any adverse effects of pesticide use while maintaining the availability of pesticides for beneficial uses and assure that effective fertilizer items are provided for agricultural and consumer uses. Responsibilities of this area include registration and certification of pesticide applicators, pesticide product registration, fertilizer product registration, special use permits, and investigations into misuse or negligence in the sale, purchase or use of fertilizers or pesticides.

The registration and certification program includes registering pesticides and fertilizers; certifying and licensing pesticide applicators and sellers; and sampling fertilizers. The intent of this area is to ensure the content of a given pesticide or fertilizer is what the label indicates and that those substances are applied in a legal and appropriate manner.

Plant Division

The Plant Division's stated mission is to detect and control, or eradicate serious insect pests and plant diseases. This division has numerous programs addressing the various facets of plant health in the state of Oregon.

The plant pest and disease program conducts detection and control programs for insect pests and plant diseases and conducts the fruit tree virus certification program and field inspections of vegetable and grass seed. The nursery and Christmas tree program inspects nursery stock and Christmas trees for diseases, insects, and weeds; enforces horticulture and nursery laws; provides certification authorizing interstate and foreign shipment of regulated plant materials; educates growers on control and eradication techniques for insects, weeds, and diseases and explains quarantine and import/export laws; and inspects imported plants and plant products for compliance with quarantine laws and USDA requirements.

Additionally, the Division administers a nationally renowned statewide noxious weed control program that has pioneered many biocontrol efforts. Biocontrol efforts involve fighting weeds with other plants or insects to contain, reduce, or eradicate a weed population.

Boards

The State Board of Agriculture advises the Director of the Department and assists in determining policies. Board members are appointed by the governor and consist of Oregon citizens, seven of whom are actively engaged in the production of agricultural commodities and two of whom are representative of consumer interests of the state.

The New Crops Development Board identifies, endorses and promotes worthy new and alternative crops for Oregon, and acts as a clearinghouse for new ideas and resources in the development of new crops. The board consists of seven members appointed by the Director and one ex-officio member.

The State Weed Board establishes a list of priority weeds for the state; assists the Director in allocating money for weed control efforts; helps coordinate weed control program efforts of various counties and advises the Director on performing weed control duties assigned to the Department. The board consists of seven members appointed by the Director.

Commissions and Advisory Committees

The Christmas Tree Advisory Committee, authorized ORS 571.025, is composed of 10 members appointed by the Director. It was created to provide close contact between the Plant Division and the nursery industry.

The Nursery Research and Regulatory Committee was created to provide close contact between the Department and the nursery industry. The committee is composed of 7 members appointed by the Director.

The Soil and Water Conservation Commission serves as liaison between the Natural Resources Division and the 45 soil and water conservation districts in Oregon. Five or 7 locally elected officials administer each district.

The Minor Crops Advisory Committee was established under ORS 634.600. The Committee is comprised of six members appointed by the ODA Director for three-year terms and one permanent member who is the coordinator of the OSU Interregional Project #4. The Committee meets one to six times per year and advises the ODA Director on minor crop pesticide use registrations and funding research projects to support the registration of specific pesticides for use on minor crops.

The Ginseng Advisory Committee comprised of ginseng growers, provides advice and recommendations to ODA about ginseng issues, per ORS 576.800-576.820.

The Director of the Department appoints 12 members to the Agricultural Development Advisory Committee, which advises and counsels the Agricultural Development Division about development of new and expansion of existing agricultural markets.

4 Chronology of Events

1854 A County Fair is held in the town of Lafayette, Yamhill County.

1861 First State Fair is held near Oregon City.

1894 Law is passed requiring all livestock brands to be registered with county clerks.

1915 Registering of livestock brands moves to the State Veterinarian's authority.

1917 Brands Adjusting Board is formed to settle brand disputes. The first state brand book is published.

1933 A chief bee inspector and deputies are appointed. The Milk Control Board is created (independent of the Department).

1935 The Nursery Inspector at Large is abolished and the Bureau of Nursery Service is established. The Flax and Linen Board is created (independent of the Department). The Oregon Agricultural Marketing Act is passed by the Legislature.

1937 The Seed Production Law is extensively revised and the Soil Conservation Act is enacted.

1938 A Revised District Plan is set up forming 17 agricultural districts. A centralized license bureau is formed within the Administrative Division.

1939 The Market Enforcement Division merges with the Plant Industry Division and the Weights and Measures Division merges with Food and Dairy. The Soil and Conservation Committee is formed (an independent body).

1941 A Horticultural Supervisor office is established. The Oregon Food Act is enacted.

1943 The Milk Control Board's authority is transferred to the Director. The first commodity commission is created (Oregon Dairy Products Commission).

1945 The Pest and Disease Survey and Control Act becomes law.

1947 The Department is authorized to collect taxes from nursery dealers for experimental station in Corvallis. Refrigerator locker plant, insecticide and fungicide, and livestock brand inspection laws are enacted. The Board of Livestock Auction Markets is created. Oregon Wheat Commission is formed.

1949 The Livestock Advisory Committee is formed. The Milk Marketing Administration is placed under authority of the Board of Agriculture. Oregon Potato Commission is formed.

1950 Grain inspection fees are decreased.

1951 The Chemical Control Act and significant amendments to the Apiary Act are legislated. The Oregon State Fair Commission is formed. The Oregon Filbert Commission is established.

1953 The Weather Modification Law and Commodity Commission Act become law. Ragweed removal authority is given to the Department.

1955 The Market Development Division is created. A pilot meat inspection study is undertaken. The Agriculture Building is remodeled and a clerical pool is established. The Oregon Fescue and Creeping Red Fescue Commission is formed.

1956 The Oregon Food Act is significantly amended.

1957 A license and bond requirement is established for hay dealers. Grade A milk usage audit, virus-free nursery stock, and brucellosis eradication projects begin. A third grain inspection branch office opens. The Oregon Fryer Commission is created.

1958 Livestock district boundaries are revamped and clarified.

1959 Inspection of custom and mobile slaughter plants becomes compulsory. The Oregon Beef Council and the Highland Bentgrass Commission are established.

1961 The Director assumed direct supervision over the Grain Inspection and Agricultural Development Divisions and two assistant directors were appointed. One was to supervise the management of Divisions related to consumer and trade services and the other had responsibility for livestock-related Divisions.

1962 The Oregon Orchardgrass Seed Producers Commission is established.

1963 The Otter Trawl Commission of Oregon is established.

1964 The Oregon Hop Commission is created.

1965 The Commodity Commission Act is amended to permit optional method of recruiting members. The Milk Audit and Stabilization Unit becomes a Division. The Oregon Bartlett Pear and Oregon Ryegrass Growers Seed Commissions are established.

1966 The new Agriculture Building is built. The Oregon Processed Prune and Plum Growers Commission is begun.

1967 Three assistant director positions are established and divide duties between livestock, administrative services, and consumer trade services Divisions. The Oregon Strawberry Commission is formed.

1969 The County Fair Commission is established and a Field Sanitation Committee is created. The Oregon Tall Fescue Commission is established.

1971 The Divisions are reorganized between two assistant directors into programs and administrative services Divisions.

1974 The Oregon Regional Sweet Cherry Commission is created.

1975 A Deputy Director and two assistant directors divide managerial duties between plant and livestock Divisions, agricultural development, and product quality control.

1976 The Oregon Onion Commission is created.

1977 The State Fair Advisory commission is established. The Oregon Dungeness Crab and Sheep Commissions are created.

1978 The Oregon Weed Advisory Committee is established.

1980 The Oregon Rangeland Advisory Commission is formed.

1981 The Soil and Water Conservation Division is established (and later becomes the Natural Resources Division in 1989). The Oregon Caneberry Commission is created and Animal Health and Livestock Identification Divisions merge at about the same time.

1982 The Pesticide Analytical and Response Center Advisory Committee begins.

1984 The Wine Advisory Board, Oregon Salmon Commission, and the Oregon Mint Commission are formed.

1985 The Oregon Processed Vegetable Commission is established.

1986 The Department is organized into 10 Divisions. An amendment is passed allowing seven commodity commissions to elect members.

1993 Senate Bill 1010 on water quality is passed.

1996 Department of Agriculture Building in Salem floods.

1998 Department of Agriculture Building reopens after extensive renovation.

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