

Testimony of

Dr. A. Scott Reed

Vice Provost for University Outreach and Engagement and

Director, Oregon Extension Service

Oregon State University

Before the

U. S. House of Representatives

Committee on Agriculture

Subcommittee on Horticulture, Research, Biotechnology, and Foreign Agriculture

“Why Cooperative Extension?--

Extending Knowledge, Changing Lives”

March 4, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I am Scott Reed. My role at Oregon State University is to serve as vice provost for university outreach and engagement and director of the Oregon Extension Service. I am an example of many others who lead such programs at the nation's 106 land grant-universities as part of the Cooperative Extension System.

Two months from now, we will celebrate the May 8, 1914 signing of the Smith-Lever Act that put into place a funding mechanism unlike any other. Federal dollars that flow to Extension services lever additional appropriations from state and county governments and create a tripartite partnership that connects knowledge resources to issues and opportunities. This distinctive network identifies priorities through systematic assessments that, while driven by national priorities, customize responses to meet state and local needs.

My own career in Extension is an example. While working in the private sector, I was responsible for a small research department in a forest products company in northern Minnesota. In that setting, my job was a problem solver for our land managers—and I had more problems than I could effectively manage. To my aid came the land-grant university Extension Service that provided intellectual depth, research design support, and access to expanded knowledge, and graduate student support—all things I would not have on my own. My role was to provide access to land and problems that the local Extension Service used as an applied learning laboratory. Through this type of engagement, we accomplished things that neither of us could do separately. Working partnerships like this illustrate a key feature of how Extension has worked for 100 years.

Back home in your states, you no doubt see the effects of Extension's work across the landscape. While it's true that we count things like people reached, acres impacted and dollars saved or earned, the durable effects of Extension emerge as healthy people, healthy economies and a healthy planet. The impacts and outcomes associated with Extension work generate huge public value. So what are some of the innovations?

In my home state of **Oregon**, the Extension Service brings together vineyard managers, winemakers and students in shared learning environments—both in-person and online in a virtual setting to advance dramatic growth in this agricultural sector. The result—wine grapes catapulted to the 17<sup>th</sup> most important crop of more than 220 commodities.

In Minnesota, concerns over the influence of climate change and weather patterns are driving Extension to develop and implement adaptation strategies. Community by community, Extension helps growers make plant selection decisions, how to deal with uninvited pests, manage extreme variations in rainfall, and choose levels of crop insurance

In Georgia, rising energy costs have made energy efficiency a high priority on farms, yet many farmers have trouble financing these improvements. Energy assessments across 47 poultry

farms, dairies, turf and row crop farms provided by Extension assisted in \$3.6 million of grant-requested renovations and projected annual savings of more than \$10,000 per farm.

In Oklahoma, development of best practices regarding the intersection of cattle grazing and wheat production created decision models and education about their application that translated to \$285 million dollars of savings from reducing lost production of wheat.

In Cooperative Extension's first 100 years, we've learned a few things and adapted our strategies to match the way people learn in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Extension is moving *beyond outreach to engagement* with our audiences and partners. Outreach begins with an answer; engagement ends with one. Through engagement with those we serve, benefits are reciprocal and we learn as much as we teach.

We're about much more than information sharing--we're in the knowledge business, and we bring to the table results of our cutting edge research—much of which is stimulated by this subcommittee. Then we partner with communities—communities of place—of interest and of practice to adapt and share practices that get implemented across our natural and human landscapes.

Without giving up the value of personal relationships and local, face-to-face education, Extension thrives in the web-based and socially-networked worlds too. ***Anywhere, anytime, any format*** defines our national network. As an illustration, this month, we'll answer five thousand questions through the electronic "Ask an Expert" system.

**Extension** is a classic American innovation envied the world over for its ability to change lives and improve the availability of safe and affordable food. **Extension** attracts Americans in partnership that dramatically expands our capacity. Nearly 100,000 Master Gardeners provide 4.5 million volunteer hours and more than 800,000 pounds of food for local food banks. **Extension** puts our youth on positive trajectories through the 4-H program where participants are twice as likely to go to college and three times more likely to contribute to their communities. And **Extension** raises people up through our Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program where 90 percent of low-income adult participants and 60 percent of youth improved their food choices.

With the leadership of visionary policy makers and annual appropriations of approximately 300 million *capacity* dollars provided by the Smith-Lever Act, we accomplish much. Smith-Lever funds are hard-working dollars that generate state and county investments and help create the infrastructure that allows effective targeting of competitive grant monies. For less than one federal dollar per American citizen, we

- keep a local office open in more than 3,000 counties,

- enroll nearly 7 million youth in the legendary 4-H youth development program,
- advance nutritional food support to limited-resource families, and
- focus on rapid response through Extension's Disaster Education Network, among other priority programs.

Recognition of the first 100 year legacy of the Smith Lever Act is important--but this isn't about looking in the rear-view mirror. More critical is the windshield view of continual adaptation to new issues, audiences and approaches. The next 100 years will continue translating science for practical application; engaging learners to co-develop solutions to complex problems; transforming individuals, families, communities and businesses in rural and urban environments. That is the work of Cooperative Extension.