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February 25, 2016

Dr. Mathieu Ngouajio
National Program Leader
Institute of Food Production and Sustainability
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA
Stop 2240; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-2240

Dear Dr. Ngouajio,

This letter is to convey the College of Agricultural Sciences support of the Oregon State University proposal "Development of Online Graduate Certificate in Organic Agriculture" that will be submitted to the USDA NIFA Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) program. This project proposal will address an important educational gap that was identified across the nation: the lack of online graduate education in Organic Agriculture (OA). Increasing organic expertise and resources at Land Grant Universities such as at OSU is a key strategy to responding to the expanding organic market.

The goal of this project is to initially address this educational gap by the development and implementation of an online certificate in OA for graduate students, professionals and post-baccalaureate students across the region and nation. After the certificate in OA has been implemented, a future effort will be to build an online MSc degree in OA. This interdisciplinary project involves faculty from multiple academic units at the College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS).

The online graduate certificate in OA will provide post-baccalaureate, graduate students in various disciplines, agricultural professionals and organic growers with a broad-based knowledge of OA rules and regulations on the production, handling, labeling of organic products, a fundamental understanding of the OA industry, practical production management knowledge in the areas of organic crops, soils, livestock, and general OA agricultural systems technology. Graduate students and post-baccalaureate are uniquely positioned as our future scientists, extension agents, public and private executives, and policy makers to have significant influence on policymaking and critical aspects of food security in the next 10-15 years. Oregon State University is well suited for the implementation of new online graduate certificate in OA since it has been a leader in providing quality education in agriculture and forestry (ranked in the top 10 worldwide) and in online education (ranked among top 10 in the United States, two years in a row).

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Arp
Dean and Reub Long Professor