



Oregon State University

# Current State of the Organic and Conventional Strawberry Industry in Oregon



SWEETER. REDDER. SIMPLY BETTER.

Shianne Olsen-Kacalek<sup>1</sup>, Javier Antonio Fernandez-Salvador\*<sup>2</sup>, Steven Tao<sup>3</sup>  
 BioResource Research Interdisciplinary Program<sup>1</sup>, \*Principal Investigator, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences<sup>2</sup>, Department of Horticulture<sup>3</sup>, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon

## Introduction

With over three billion pounds of berries grown nationally each year, strawberries are an important economic contributor to agriculture in the US (Grubinger, 2012). However the strawberry industry in Oregon has been in a period of transition over the past few years. Strawberry acreage, planted and harvested, as well as yield and production dropped over 2004 to 2014 while the value per harvested acre was up overall (Beeles, 2015). Despite this Oregon remained the number three producer of strawberries in the nation (Beeles, 2015; Losh, 2017). While there are vast amounts of information published on the strawberry industry in California and Florida, significantly less is known about the strawberry industry in Oregon.

The objective of this project is to: guide future research, improve collaboration between extension, industry, and growers to meet growers needs through the completion of a needs assessment survey.

## Objectives

- Conduct online, individual in-person surveys and interviews with growers to obtain information on current state of conventional, organic, fresh market, and processed strawberry industry in Oregon.
- Collect data on total farm and strawberry crop acreage, cultivars grown, whether fruit is grown for fresh market, processing, or both; farming practices including crop, aisle, and soil management, season-extension technologies, crop nutrition and irrigation, pest and disease prevention and control, opportunities and concerns.
- Determine how OSU Extension Service may better meet the needs of these growers by summarizing, analyzing, and interpreting collected data.
- Share results with survey participants, other growers, industry representatives, and the public.

## Methods:

- A large pool of questions based on the objectives of the project was generated.
- Questions were then reduced and focused the scope and questions of the survey thorough review process
- The comprehensive survey contains questions on general farm information, growers needs and challenges as well as extension services.

### Create Survey

### Obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval

- Required training for human subjects research was completed
- An extensive review of all methods and materials
- Confidentiality protocol was developed to ensure anonymity for all growers
- Received IRB approval

- Once a list of growers was established, growers were individually contacted to schedule site visits.
- The survey will also be available online as there will only be a limited number of in-person interviews conducted.
- The online survey will contain all the same questions as the in-person interview and will allow more growers to be contacted.

### Interview Growers

### Data Analysis

- Once the interviews are completed and the online surveys are collected data analysis will begin.
- Responses by individuals will be sorted and analyzed by groups according to specific characteristics (certification status, size, county, etc.)

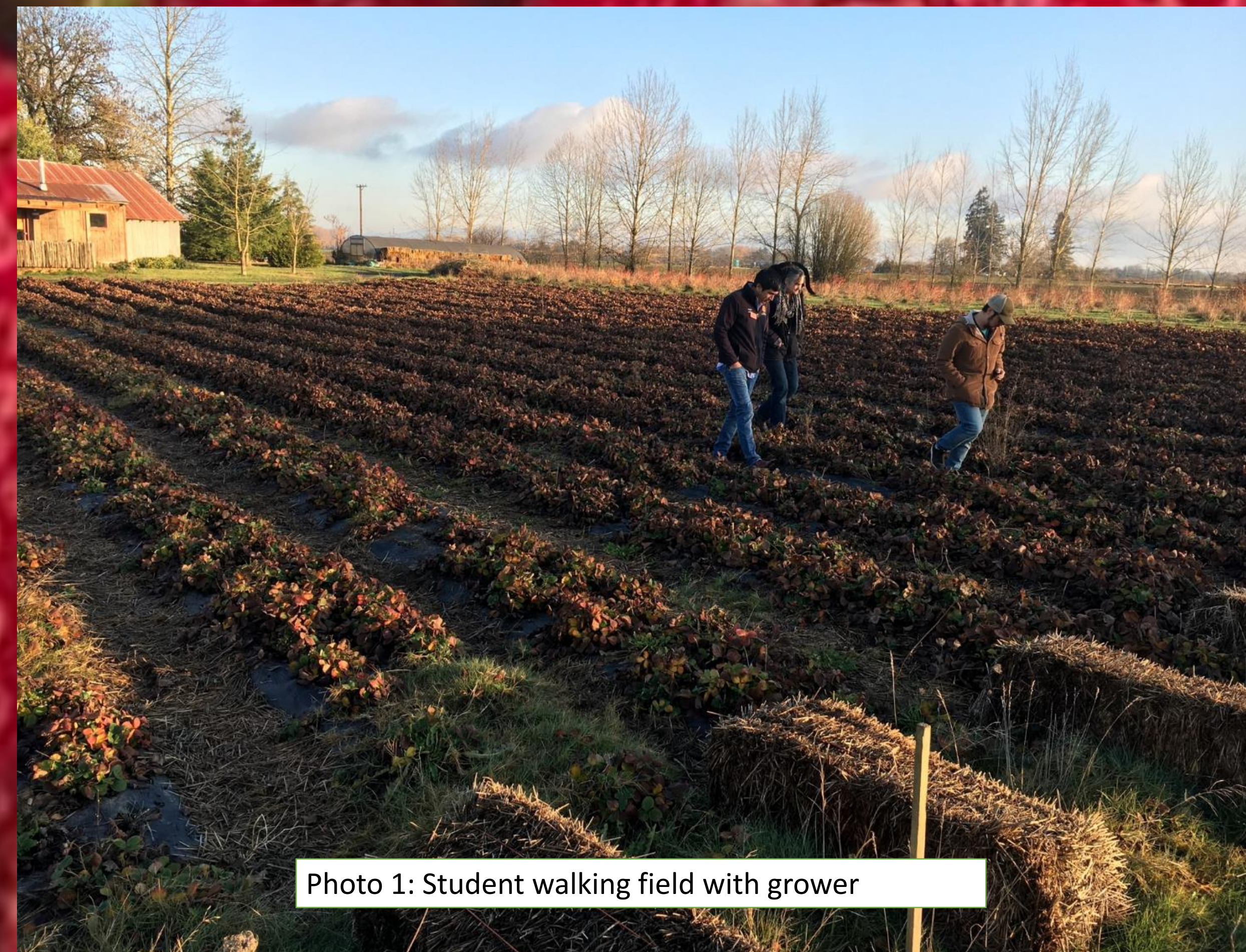


Photo 1: Student walking field with grower

## Projected Results

This project will provide valuable information to the OSU Extension Services, the legislative Berry Initiative the Oregon Strawberry Commission, and the industry in general, allowing the organizations to obtain additional insight into the programming interests and needs of strawberry growers within Oregon.

In addition, this project will serve as a way to connect with growers for future research including a strawberry nutrient survey by the Primary Investigator

## Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the legislature Berry Initiative Oregon Strawberry Commission for the funding allocated to this project and the growers participating in the survey.

Thank you to the support of the OSU beginning researcher program for student funding.

## Literature cited

- Altschuld, J. W., & Watkins, R. (2014). A primer on needs assessment: More than 40 years of research and practice. In J. W. Altschuld & R. Watkins (Eds.), *Needs assessment: Trends and a view toward the future*. New Directions for Evaluation, 144, 5–18.
- Beels, L., 2015. Oregon Agripedia.
- Grubinger, Vern. "History of the strawberry." *Farming*, August 2012, 95+. *Agriculture Collection* (accessed January 25, 2019).
- Losh, D., 2017. Oregon Agriculture: Facts and Figures