

**Testimony to the Oregon Senate Environment & Natural Resources Committee
RE: SB 853**

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March 26, 2019

Good afternoon. My name is Mark Dickman. I am testifying today in opposition to Senate Bill 853, which, if adopted would negatively impact Oregon's farmers.

My family and I operate a family-owned farm east of Mt. Angel. My grandfather bought the farm in 1929, and it has been passed down through the generations. I grew up on our farm, and my wife and I have raised our children in and around our fields. When I first started farming the land with my parents, our farm was 200 acres. We have grown our farming operation substantially, and today it is approximately 2,700 acres. We grow onions, cauliflower, and snap beans, in rotation with turf grass seed crops. Winter wheat is grown some years, depending on our rotation in a particular field. We also have approximately 40 acres of hazelnuts. Our farm employs 8 people year around, and as much as 25 workers on a seasonal basis; they are crucial to our success, and our most valued asset. We own less than 1/3 of the acres we farm; the rest is leased from approximately 40 landlords. Many of these people are retired, and depend on our annual rent payments to them for a significant part of their income. They also trust us and rely on us to take good care of their farms, stewarding resources that have often been in their families longer we've farmed. Make no mistake, we are in business to make a profit, but to do so also requires a significant commitment, financial and otherwise, to a large group of people who depend on us to do the right thing.

We have been early adopters of new products and techniques, using the latest in knowledge and skill to produce our crops in a sustainable, environmentally responsible way. Our farm was the statewide winner of the Oregon Wheat Growers League's Conservation Farm of the Year award in 1997, has passed the NORPAC Foods, Inc. stewardship audit (including Food Alliance certification) since 2005, has passed Unilever's worldwide "Muddy Boots" sustainability audit, has passed the American Institute of Baking's sustainability audit as a grower for National Frozen Foods, and has passed GAP audits (administered by Oregon Department of Agriculture) the past six years for our onion production. We have done this, in part, by using the best practices to reduce our nutrient and pesticide footprint. Examples include, for instance, pre-sidedress nitrogen testing, sampling to predict the severity of garden symphylan infestations, and regular monitoring of pests, to prescriptively use pest controls. I cite these awards, certifications, and practices not to brag, but to illustrate our credentials with regard to responsible pesticide use.

Without chlorpyrifos in our toolbox, many of our crops are at risk of not being economically viable. We, along with other farmers in our area, have experienced field loss as a result of insect pests. Any loss of yield could force our farm out of business on that crop. That's why I think SB 853 is a mistake.

We use chlorpyrifos as an "over-the-top" treatment at planting time to control onion maggots. An infestation of maggots can severely damage, or even wipe out, a planting of onions. Onions are our highest value crop; chlorpyrifos is the only product available that effectively controls onion maggots. Loss of chlorpyrifos could prevent us from growing the crop that provides over a quarter of our gross farm income. Onions are a high value crop, with opportunity for excellent profit, if the market "cooperates" (if the market doesn't "cooperate," they generate fantastic losses!). They are also a high input crop: Our direct costs per acre to plant, grow and harvest are five times the direct costs to produce an acre of grass seed. Because of this, we must consider all our risks carefully. If we don't have chlorpyrifos in our pest control toolbox, we may choose to not plant the crop at all.

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We also use chlorpyrifos (as Lorsban Advanced) as a pre-plant soil treatment in our cauliflower transplant seedbeds. Treating a seedbed (approximately 1 acre of seedbed produces transplants for 50+ acres of field production) gives us control of root maggot, and suppresses garden symphylans; either can damage or destroy cauliflower plants. Taking “clean” plants (without root maggot infestation) to the field is our first line of defense for controlling root maggot.

In addition, we use chlorpyrifos (as Lorsban 75WG) as an “over-the-row” treatment in transplanted cauliflower, to control root maggot, cutworms, and aphids. Cauliflower is our second-highest value per acre crop; loss of this important insect control tool would result in root maggot damage severe enough to make this crop economically unfeasible, putting us out of the cauliflower business. Cauliflower represents 10-15% of our gross farm income.

Chlorpyrifos is used as a seed treatment on all of the bean seed that we plant. It is important to protect our young plants from root-feeding insects. Chlorpyrifos works well, and eliminates the need for further treatments, at what would be much higher per-acre rates. Although snap beans are not a high-margin crop for us, they do represent 15–20% of our gross farm income, and have a significant place in our rotation, particularly as we plant prior to planting grass seed crops.

I have other concerns regarding this bill, and its potential impact on Oregon agriculture:

- First, I believe it is a mistake to legislate product by product. Oregon farmers will be the direct losers. We must maintain a uniform pesticide regulatory system across the county. It is important for a level playing field and for our export competitiveness. Oregon Department of Agriculture already has the authority to implement state specific regulations regarding pesticide use and labels. They have used this authority judicially, but also effectively where needed.
- Second, the success of Oregon agriculture is due in no small part to its diversity. If this legislation is adopted, and makes production of one or more of my crops unprofitable, it will reduce the crop choices available to me and my neighbors. It will have a significant impact on vegetable growers, who already face unique pest challenges with limited tools available. Make no mistake, I will farm the ground, but it will just be more acres of a less profitable crop. This does not promote economic growth.
- Third, there would be irony in this if I couldn't use chlorpyrifos: Our main outlet for onions is Curry & Company in Brooks. They try to purchase onions locally, because the supermarkets they sell to are more and more requesting local foods. If they can't source Willamette Valley onions, they will bring them in from other areas, like eastern Washington. Onions that have been produced with chlorpyrifos will still be in our local supermarkets, offered for sale to Oregon consumers.

Our farm has been in business for 90 years; we're now operated by the third and fourth generations, and intend to be in business producing food for many years to come. We have over 30 years of experience using products containing chlorpyrifos. We must continue to have chlorpyrifos available for our use, and I am confident we can continue to use this product, as we use all pesticides, responsibly. I urge you to NOT support SB 853. Thank you for your consideration, and for your time today.