

Dear Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

My name is Maud Powell and I am a seed farmer in Jacksonville, OR. I am writing in support of HB 2882 and the -2 amendment. It is important to me that the specialty seed industry in Oregon is protected from genetically engineered (GE) contamination, ideally in a manner that does not pit farmer against farmer. My husband Tom and I own and operate Wolf Gulch Farm, a certified organic operation . We've been growing seed for the past 15 and make approximately 35% of our income off of seed.

Oregon is one of the world's top five seed growing regions and many farmers around the nation, and the world, purchase Oregon seed. While some seed growers have the means to test their seeds for GE contamination, some do not, and if Oregon seed stocks are contaminated by GE material, the contamination could spread throughout the state and beyond. Gene flow contamination from GE crops to conventional, organic, and wild plants can easily result from pollen drift, seed mixing, flooding, seeds in machinery, seed spillage and a variety of natural events and human errors that occur at each stage of the crop process.

GE contamination, and the threat of contamination, have cost U.S. farmers billions of dollars in rejected sales, loss of reputation, lost exports, and closed agricultural markets. Oregon alfalfa, wheat and vegetable seed growers are unfortunately among those harmed. For example, an Oregon seed grower lost the majority of his *Beta* crop market—worth \$18,000 a year—due to the threat of contamination by Roundup Ready sugar beets. Eastern Oregon continues to grapple with the persistence of GE Bentgrass, which initially escaped from a GE field trial. Also, the 500 acre cap on canola grown in the Willamette Valley sunsets in July, and the potential allowance of additional canola acreage in the future could have disastrous effects on the specialty seed market due to increased pest and disease pressures, as well as GE and other cross contamination concerns. Ninety percent of canola has been contaminated with GE traits and it is only a matter of time that it will infect Oregon's prime seed growing regions if allowed in greater amounts.

The U.S. organic seed market for crops was worth more than \$460 million in 2015 and is predicted to reach \$5.4 billion by the year 2024. However, the supply for organic seed is insufficient. Growing the organic seed market in Oregon could be a major economic opportunity for the state. Organic seed can yield between \$10K and \$50K an acre; GE seed only \$1000 an acre. However, this market will not be able to grow without adequate protections from GE contamination in place.

Currently, the burden to fence out GE contamination falls solely on the organic and non-GE farmer. In some geographic regions, like Southern Oregon's windy and narrow Rogue Valley, or areas where there is a preponderance of GE crops, this can be impossible. In light of this, co-existence between GE and non-GE needs to be viewed through a far wider lens and isolation distances that protect organic and non-GE farmers need to be taken into account.

Unfortunately, the federal government does nothing to protect farmers from GE contamination and the State of Oregon has similarly failed to act. Further, all counties

except Jackson County, are preempted from regulating the types of seeds used in their jurisdictions.

HB 2882 and the -2 amendment was drafted with the intent to finally create equitable protections for organic and non-GE growers and I urge you to support these farmers by calling for GE regulations that prevent GE contamination in Oregon. Please vote HB 2882 and the -2 amendments out of committee with a "do pass" recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration and service,

Maud Powell

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