



OREGON
WHEAT



From the Desk of Senator David Brock Smith

April 10, 2023

Re: Opposition to SB 789 – Permanent restrictions on Canola

The undersigned represent farmers, ranchers, and foresters from around the state who want to see a thriving agricultural and natural resources sector rooted in science-based policy, innovation, and stewardship.

Representatives from our organizations have contributed to legislative and regulatory discussions around canola restrictions for more than two decades. While we are sympathetic to the specialty seed industry and the concerns being raised about cross-pollination and seed purity, there is no justification for the continued and permanent restriction of a legal and viable crop like canola.

Canola is certainly not the only crop to pose an issue to neighboring crops, nor are cross-pollination issues the only issues that must be negotiated between neighbors. Far from it. Throughout our organizations' long histories, we have been engaged in a number of formal and informal workgroups to help find solutions to this and similar issues, with an end goal of coexistence across a wide diversity of crops and production practices.

Several years ago, the Oregon legislature called for and received (from Oregon State University) an extensive review of potential negative impacts to specialty seed crops from canola. That review found “no reasons, agronomic or biological, that canola production should be prohibited in the Willamette Valley when there are no restrictions on the production of other Brassicaceae crops.”¹ And while the Oregon Department of Agriculture has the authority to restrict crops based on imminent threat of pest, weed, or disease issues that might require area-wide control, **the Agency does not have the authority to restrict certain crops to prioritize the specific marketing concerns of others. Nor should that be justification for legislative restrictions on a legal crop.**

Canola provides an important rotational crop for many growers. It improves soil structure and soil health by increasing water infiltration. With a high yield potential and low water needs, canola can be a successful new crop for many growers adapting to a changing climate. And with processors in the Pacific Northwest, there are local markets for canola, which significantly reduces transportation costs.

Whether it is the size of our farms, the production practices we choose, or the type of crop we choose to grow, **the legislature should not be in the business of deciding, based on subjective opinions rather than science, which crops, or types of production should receive preferential treatment over others.** A permanent cap on canola in the Willamette Valley lacks scientific or agronomic basis, and unnecessarily prevents access to an important rotational crop that would provide Oregon growers with new and expanded opportunities. Please vote no on this bill, support coexistence, and allow growers and other stakeholders to develop effective, science-based solutions to address concerns or issues if they arise.

Please vote NO SB 789.

Oregonians for Food & Shelter
Oregon Farm Bureau
Oregon Wheat Growers League
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/Administration/HB2427ReportCanola.pdf>