

5/10/2023

Re: Support for SB 789

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

My name is Chris Hardy. I live in Ashland, Oregon and I am writing on behalf of our seed company, Hardy Seeds. Since 2015, we have been growing and selling heritage seed specifically adapted to climate challenges here in Oregon and beyond.

I am writing today in support of SB 789, which maintains current protections for the Willamette Valley's lucrative brassica vegetable seed industry.

Our operation depends on access to a wide variety of brassica seed we receive from growers throughout the Pacific Northwest, especially from the Willamette Valley where innovative plant breeders offer germ plasm, some that they have gone to great lengths to source and produce, some over their entire lives.

We are focused on climate-adapted varieties, especially those that use minimal to zero supplemental irrigation. Our customers, including seed companies we contract with on both East and West coasts, have no tolerance for diseased seeds, and zero tolerance for contamination from genetically engineered (GE) varieties of same species.

Cross contamination is the most important issue to consider when assessing the future of seed in the Willamette Valley—that is why it is a protected district. Dr. Jim Myers, Dr. Dan Hillburn, and Dr Ray Seidler are all experts in their respective fields and spoke directly about cross contamination concerns with canola in the Valley. The 2017 Dr. Carol Mallory Smith study only looked at weed, pest, and disease issues, which is not the complete story. I have been raising this alarm for a decade and am disappointed that the legislature is considering risking the future of the world's brassica seed supply so a handful of growers can have unlimited, unpinned canola production.

No other protected district has conditions like this, and for good reason.

As a small seed company, we are very concerned about the potential of seed-borne

disease and GE contamination, and how this could impact our ability to produce high quality seed for our customers and the industry long into the future. These issues have already been a burden to our operation over the years, despite promises from the ODA and USDA, and would most certainly not be alleviated if current protections in the Willamette are ended.

Our high value specialty seed industry should not bear the brunt of inevitable issues brought on by introduction of low-value commodity canola into the Willamette Valley. Oregon must do everything in its power to protect the high-value area we currently hold on the global stage in the top 5 quality seed producing areas of the world.

For these reasons, I **strongly urge you to vote YES on SB 789** to ensure the Willamette Valley stays a premier seed production region globally and an economic strength for our beautiful state.

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Regards,

Chris Hardy Owner, Operator Hardy Seeds