

Submitter: Susan Ortiz

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and
Water

Measure: HB4059

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owens and Hartman, and members of the committee,

I appreciate the time you have spent working with the specialty seed industry regarding the canola issue in the Willamette Valley Protected District over the past several years, it has been a contentious issue for all involved.

I am a small farmer, who produces specialty seed crops with the Willamette Valley Protected District "WVPD" and am very concerned with allowing canola to be produced at all within the District, particularly due to known cross pollination contamination from canola production with other brassica species produced for vegetable seed.

I have years of experience in vegetable seed production, with post-graduate work at Oregon State University under Dr James Baggett, working in vegetable breeding, including brassica species, at SunSeeds in Brooks, Oregon, and on-farm seed crop production. Throughout these experiences, I have found that an essential thread is that it is always necessary to ensure varietal purity by eliminating cross pollination with unintended and undesirable species and varieties.

The introduction of canola, on any scale, but particularly any scale larger than 500 acres, should be cause for concern for any consumer throughout not just in the WVPD Oregon but the United States and internationally. The WVPD is a major producer of brassica seed in the United States and it is vital to the integrity of that seed production that our product is to true to type and free of contamination from canola, particularly genetically engineered "GE" canola.

Gene flow from GE canola has been well documented throughout North America, and the findings all concluded that "it will be difficult to prevent the introduction of transgenic canola into an area even if there [were] a provision to only allow conventional canola production." Wells, G. (2014, February). Canola in the Valley. Canola in the Valley. <https://archive.progress.oregonstate.edu/winter-2013/canola-valley>

In Canada within 7 years after the release of glufosinate-resistant GE canola, 96% of non-GE canola had detectable levels of GE seed; illustrating that it is impossible to prevent gene-flow from GE canola. Mallory-Smith, C., & Zapiola, M. (2008). Gene flow from glyphosate-resistant crops. *Pest Management Science*, 64(4), 428–440.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/ps.1517>

Knowing that international purchasers of Brassica vegetable seed crops have extremely low tolerances and/or zero tolerance for GE gene presence, those markets will be inaccessible for any brassica seed grown in WVPD should GE canola be allowed.

HB 4059-7 will help to protect the integrity of the WVPD by establishing isolation distances between canola and other brassica seed crops, permanently limiting the maximum number of canola acres, requiring field pinning to ensure isolation distances, and civil penalties for negligence.

While I would prefer to see a complete ban on canola, and specifically a ban on GE canola, in the WVPD, HB 4059-7 is a compromise that will hopefully allow small farms to continue to exist without being pushed out by a few well-established legacy farmers set on preventing new farmers from becoming successful and eliminating profitable enterprises for small family farms.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Susan Ortiz