



March 1, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for House Bill 2679, Relating to neonicotinoid pesticides

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the more than 55,000 members and supporters of the Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, we write in support of House Bill 2679, which directs the State Department of Agriculture to classify certain pesticides containing neonicotinoids (neonics) as restricted-use. We also request that you add seeds coated with neonics to the bill.

Neonicotinoids are one of our most potent insecticides and need state-wide regulation. Their potency was brought to Oregonians' attention on June 17, 2013, when a neonicotinoid pesticide killed more than 50,000 bumble bees in a Target parking lot in Wilsonville, Oregon. This was the largest known bee die-off in the United States. In 2014, in response to this disaster Eugene became the first city in the United States to ban the use of neonics on city property with Portland following their example in 2015. That same year, the Oregon Department of Agriculture banned the use of four neonicotinoid products on linden, basswood, and other Tilia trees. The Wilsonville incident, and responses to it, highlighted the risks that bees and other pollinators face from neonics. But, subsequently scientists have discovered that they are highly toxic to more than just bees.¹

Neonics contaminated soil can persist for years, contaminating water and harming plant life. In addition, lab studies have reported "a slew of evidence that exposure to neonics is harmful to vertebrate animals," such as birds and amphibians.² Mammals suffer reproductive abnormalities and shortened life spans after exposure to neonics. Neonic residues have also been found in our drinking water and food, including the fruits and vegetables we feed our families. These toxic chemicals persist because systemic insecticides permeate every part of a plant therefore cannot be washed off.

An important concern that is not included in this bill is the largest use of neonics, which is in the coating of corn and other crop seeds. Crop seed coating is an international phenomenon and is a growing source

¹Neonicotinoids in California Their Use and Threats to the State's Aquatic Ecosystems and Pollinators, with a Focus on Neonic-Treated Seeds

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344418270_Neonicotinoids_in_California_Their_Use_and_Threats_to_the_State's_Aquatic_Ecosystems_and_Pollinators_with_a_Focus_on_Neonic-Treated_Seeds. Neonicotinoids

-Environmental Risk Assessment To Natural Enemies And Pollinators.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363210981_NEONICOTINOIDS_-_ENVIRONMENTAL_RISK_ASSESSMENT_TO_NATURAL_ENEMIES_AND_POLLINATORS

² A review of the direct and indirect effects of neonicotinoids and fipronil on vertebrate wildlife.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4284370/>

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of profit for agrochemical/seed corporations. Neonics that coat seeds are not recognized as pesticides, and not counted as pesticide use, yet this toxic coating is used in almost every cornfield. This routine use of neonics is largely invisible to most people. Once applied to seeds, neonics are exempt from regulation in the United States, making them uncommonly studied and poorly tracked.³

The claims that neonics are of benefit to farmers, and to their bottom lines, do not hold up when independent researchers investigate, as Dr. Michele Haldik of the US Geological Survey and her colleagues state in their 2018 report: “Evidence of clear and consistent yield benefits from the use of neonicotinoids remains elusive for most crops.”⁴ Farmers who use uncoated seed will pay less for that seed and reap higher profits per acre. And based on reports of studies of multiple types of crops, it appears that discontinuing routine use of neonic-coated crop seed will not cut crop yields, but it will protect wildlife, water, and soil.

The sooner we transition off of neonics, the better. The beneficial insects that eat crop pests and keep them under control are also killed by neonics. Those “good” insect populations, the pest predators, are a part of a healthy, diverse cropping system. As Elizabeth D. Hilborn observed on her own farm and within the broader farming community in North Carolina, once insects and animals are gone, it takes a long time for them to return. *If they return.*⁵

For all of the above reasons, we urge you to vote yes on HB 2679.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Bowes, Policy Strategist

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Bowes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

³<https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/when-is-a-pesticide-not-a-pesticide-when-it-coats-a-seed>

⁴ NTP Research Report on the Scoping Review of Potential Human Health Effects Associated with Exposures to Neonicotinoid Pesticides. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK563583/>

⁵ Elizabeth D. Hilborn, *Restoring Eden: Unearthing the agribusiness secret that poisoned my farming community*, (Chicago, Illinois, Chicago Review Press Inc, 2023)

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