



"The Voice of Oregon's Wheat Producers Since 1926"

**Testimony before the House Committee on
Agriculture and Natural Resources
Respectfully Submitted by Jana Jarvis on behalf of
The Oregon Wheat Growers League
March 26, 2013**

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

RE: Opposition to HB 2319, HB 2715, and HB 2736

The Oregon Wheat Growers League, on behalf of over 1400 wheat and barley producers state-wide, opposes these bills designed to place additional restrictions on genetically engineered (GE) crops. The additional requirements to grow these crops, as well as the potential liability, would create a disincentive for production based on fear rather than science.

The debate over GE crops is clouded with misinformation and misunderstanding on the part of opponents. Genetic modification is not new in agriculture and today's biotechnology has been developed to increase yields and reduce chemicals while providing a consistently safe food supply. In the United States GE crops are highly regulated by the USDA, EPA, and FDA and there is overwhelming scientific consensus on the safety of these products.

These three bills, however, seek to discourage the growth of GE crops in Oregon by placing additional, costly burdens on producers who choose to grow them. HB 2319 would place ODA in charge of "protecting" non-genetically engineered crop growers from neighbors who grow GE crops. It gives ODA the authority to collect civil penalties and suggests that GE crops are a threat to neighboring farmers without ANY scientific justification.

HB 2715 would allow counties to establish control areas for crops that contain GE materials. This bill would create the potential for Oregon's 36 counties and over 400 cities to add regulations on these crops without having the necessary technical expertise. This would create a regulatory nightmare not only for growers, but for manufacturers, distributors and local governments to comply with.

HB 2736 would establish protocols for the acquisition and analysis of samples of GE plants and require growers to register with ODA prior to growing them. The process defined in this legislation implies a danger to growing these crops which is not scientifically substantiated. It would limit a grower's flexibility in planting for crops that are already highly regulated while creating the assumption of a threat to neighboring farmers.

With a growing world population and an increasing demand for food, producers today are looking to increase yields at the same time they are looking to reduce their environmental impact on soil, water and air quality. GE crops have been developed to address these demands and have proven, for over two decades, to provide zero health risks. These bills, however, suggest

otherwise and create unfounded concerns over GE crops. The proliferation of GE crops is expanding and GE wheat is expected within a few years. This will only increase the need for farmers to coexist with each as they have for years whether they grow conventional, organic or GE crops. HB 2319, HB 2715, and HB 2736 will do little to encourage this cooperation. For this reason the Oregon Wheat Growers League asks that you reject these proposals and work instead toward providing assurances to producers that Oregon will support their efforts to feed the world.