

Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and and Natual Resources,

This morning the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce voted unanimously to support HB2427 banning canola from the WV. Needless to say this made me very happy as canola production is a clear and present danger to us.

The Willamette Valley is one of the top vegetable seed producing regions in the world. Vegetable seeds grown here are sold locally, nationally and internationally, bringing in over \$30 million in sales each year for family farmers and local seed businesses in western Oregon. This specialty vegetable seed industry is sustained by a unique growing climate, high quality soils, coordination among growers to ensure seed purity, and an established protected seed-producing district where limits have been placed on canola for years.

But just last month, the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) finalized a controversial new rule for canola in the Willamette Valley that puts our specialty seed industry at great risk. Coupled with potential impacts to fresh market vegetable producers, organic growers, and clover seed production, the ODA is gambling with the future of a sustainable agricultural resource that brings in well over \$100 million in sales annually to Willamette Valley farmers.

Canola can be, and is, grown in many parts of Oregon for biofuel and edible oil. Though Oregon is not a major canola producing state, it has its role in some agricultural operations. We have no objection to either biofuel or canola production in many parts of Oregon where it has been allowed for years, but the ODA has made a terrible, and potentially irreversible, mistake in opening up the Willamette Valley to this crop.

Canola is member of the same family of plants as broccoli, cabbage, mustards and many other high value vegetable crops grown for seed in the Willamette Valley. The problem with canola is that it readily cross-pollinates with these vegetable crops, and can contaminate pure lots of vegetable seed and clover seed, rendering them worthless and unsalable. Canola also harbors a number of the same pests and diseases vegetable and seed farmers constantly work to mitigate, raising the risk of further pest pressure and additional costs on our industry.

Additionally, the vast majority of canola seed in use today has been genetically modified to resist commonly available herbicides, and canola's ability to cross-pollinate with some of the Willamette Valley's existing weeds could result in new weed problems as herbicide resistant traits are spread throughout the Valley, exacerbating problems for all seed and vegetable producers. As state budget cuts have reduced ODA's ability to address invasive weed problems statewide, introducing canola at this time is particularly ill-advised.

As ODA Director Katy Coba told a Senate Committee on February 14, "it's fair to say in other parts of the world, specialty seed industries have been destroyed by large amounts of canola. And that there is a level of canola where you do jeopardize specialty seeds but we just don't know what that acreage is." If this is the case, why is the ODA gambling with the future of the Willamette Valley and our food supply?

The Willamette Valley's unique ability to produce vegetable seed, clover and fresh vegetables should be preserved and protected from the pest, weed and cross-contamination risks from canola. Allowing canola seed production in the Willamette Valley undermines and puts at risk this world-renowned resource, and the Valley's economically important vegetable seed production industry, large network of vegetable growers, and our food supply.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture made a major mistake by abruptly changing Willamette Valley canola policy this year, and we believe the Oregon Legislature should intervene to restore protections that have worked and sustained our industry for years. Passing HB 2427 would protect the Willamette Valley from canola and we are urging swift legislative action on this issue. If you care about access to local food, and the sustainability of family farms in the Willamette Valley, we ask that you raise your voice on this issue as well. Canola can be, and is, grown in most of the rest of Oregon. Let's keep it that way.

I appreciate your consideration of this matter and can be reached anytime on my cell phone 541-974-2293.

Warm Regards

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