



Adaptive Seeds

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Testimony for Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Hearing

HB 2427 – Prohibiting Canola Production in the Willamette Valley

March 19, 2013

My name is Sarah Kleeger. My husband and I own Adaptive Seeds, a small but rapidly growing specialty seed company located near Sweet Home, in Linn County. We offer around 300 varieties of vegetable, flower, herb, and small grain seed. Approximately 80% of the varieties in our catalog are unavailable from other seed companies, either in the US or internationally. We grow the vast majority of our seeds ourselves, with some varieties contracted with local growers. Adaptive Seeds has customers in all 50 states, and all over the world.

Our customers come to us not only for our unique seeds but also for our commitment to preserving agricultural biodiversity. For us and our customers, this means high quality seed that is free of contamination, GMO or otherwise. The threat of cross-pollination and/or physical contamination from Canola under the ODA's new administrative rule is very real. And for us, because of the rare varieties that we steward, the cross-pollination would not only destroy a particular seed lot and possibly our business, but also has the potential to destroy an entire vegetable variety. Forever.

Cross-pollination from nearby Canola fields is only one of the many ways this crop threatens my business, my farm, and my livelihood. The ODA has mentioned the possibility of “seed scatter during crop transport”¹. For crops grown on the 25 acre scale² seed scatter is real, and you can see this for yourself when driving along seed transport roads.

One of our contract farms has never produced Brassica seed before, but they are located on Highway 228, a seed transport route. At a recent visit we discovered several volunteer turnips – in the hazelnut and apple orchards, in the driveway, as well as in the field. This is a farm that has never intentionally produced turnip seed.

¹ See ODA's 11/5/2012 request to the State Emergency Board for funding to research co-existence between canola and specialty seed crops. This request was later withdrawn.

² The minimum canola field size as per ODA's Administrative rule 603-052-0882, approved 2/7/13.

While in this case turnips are mostly harmless, Canola is much more problematic. The occasional turnip is one thing, but since Canola will be grown in larger fields, when it goes feral it will travel far and fast, easily ending up right in the middle of a turnip, kale, or rutabaga seed crop. It may flower at the same time, contaminating the variety with both cross-pollination and physical contamination since the Canola seed will be indistinguishable from the vegetable Brassica seed crop.

The Willamette Valley is a valuable, special place – seed grown here supplies the whole world! The Valley is also a modern center of diversity for vegetable species, as seed companies not only produce seed here but breed new varieties as well. It would be tragic to sacrifice these high economic and ecologic values for a commodity oilseed crop that has destroyed seed growing regions in France and Germany due to cross pollination and increased disease and pest pressure. The Willamette Valley has absorbed some of the seed production that was displaced due to the introduction of Canola in these other areas. How unfortunate it would be if we were to squander the high value specialty seed industry for farmers in the Willamette Valley by making the same mistake? The mistake of believing that commodity Canola production can co-exist with vegetable Brassica seed production. Studies³ and experience show that it does not work.

The industry that we refer to as “specialty seed” is called that because of its high dollar value. But it's important to keep in mind that the majority of these specialty seeds are the foundation of our food. They are the source of vegetables that feed us and keep us healthy. By destroying the Willamette Valley as a vegetable seed production region, we are putting our own, and the world's, food supply at risk.

I urge you to restrict Canola production in Oregon to areas outside of the Willamette Valley and support HB 2427.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Sarah Kleeger

Owner, Adaptive Seeds

Sweet Home, OR

³ Karow, Russ. “Canola in Western Oregon – Information from the Literature and OSU Research Activities and Some Speculations.” Dept of Crop and Soil Science, OSU. January 16, 2010 available online at <http://www.friendsoffamilyfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ODA-Oilseed-Synopsis-Report-01.16.10-1.pdf>