

**Testimony of the Oregon Farmers' Markets Association for HB 2427
House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources**

The Oregon Farmers' Markets Association supports HB 2427 and opposes any expansion of Willamette Valley growing areas for rapeseed/canola. This bill is necessary to roll back recent administrative actions that threaten an irreplaceable \$32 million specialty seed industry.

The legislature must weigh in because the agency has wholly failed to fulfill its responsibility to create and maintain exclusion zones.

Some legislators have philosophical qualms about government regulating who can grow what where. We don't have a blank slate. There have been restrictions since the late 1980s. Nor is this a playground spat you can tell the kids to resolve on their own. As Frank Morton will explain, the risk flows in one direction, so pro-canola forces, who don't need pure seed, have no incentive to play nice.

Read the scorching court opinion about the hastily imposed temporary rule to get a sense of how badly this was handled. ODA got the message that some public process was necessary, held two more hearings and adopted a rule that did not respect the great weight of testimony.

Members of this committee should not conclude that adding 2,500 acres is any sort of nuanced approach on ODA's part. **Variations are unlimited** under the administrative rule, so the limit can be increased with or without an administrative hearing.

There has been no change in the science that would justify ANY additional Willamette Valley acreage for this rapacious crop. Knowing this, how could Oregon trade this world class seed industry for what might well end up being the agricultural Flavor of the Month?

Long after the sugar rush and ice cream headache is over, the irreparable damage to the Willamette Valley's \$32 million annual specialty seed crop would remain, essentially forever.

You might be wondering why this is a farmers' market issue.

Farmers' market vendors, like farmers of all production scales and channels, often do more than one thing to make a living. A number of small growers at farmers' markets are also growing vegetable seed in the geographic area that would suffer contamination.

A larger segment of farmers' market vendors are growers of brassicas and consumers of Willamette Valley grown vegetable seeds, which means they are hurt two ways. They would not be able to save their own seeds, and they would lose access to the excellent Willamette Valley seeds that they and farmers the world over have come to rely on.

Other market vendors are growing non-vegetable seed crops like red clover that are not brassicas but would still be affected by canola/rapeseed weed seeds. Recently one of OFMA's directors heard from a grass seed farmer who produces forage grasses that he would no longer

be able to sell to his European customers if genetically modified crops were allowed in the Willamette Valley.

And some farmers' market vendors are also grass seed growers. We understand their desires for a viable winter rotation crop since open field burning was limited to 15,000 acres a year. The housing bust torched residential grass seed sales, and they are looking for a revenue crop as well as a pest break.

We are confident that OSU researchers will continue their efforts to find good rotation crops for grass seed farmers. That's crops, plural. A one-crop solution is not a solution.

We are also certain that you don't fix a problem for one group of farmers by destroying a world-class market for another group of farmers.

Seeds growers and purchasers are harmed regardless of whether they grow organically or conventionally or something in between and also regardless of whether the rapeseed/canola is GMO or traditionally bred. The reality that rapeseed/canola is mostly GMO does worsen the issue, but you could set aside this aspect and still conclude that HB 2427 is essential.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this critical issue from the perspective of growers who sell at farmers' markets and other farm-direct venues.

Rebecca Landis
Immediate past president