

19<sup>th</sup> of March, 2012

House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee

Re. House bill 2427

I am writing this letter to present my unequivocal opposition to altering the current prohibition of oilseed rape (canola) in the Willamette Valley's protected district. My name is Sandra Verlaaf residing at 11190 Meridian Street, Independence OR 97351.

I have been in the seed industry for about 18 years and have been involved in multiple roles in various countries (The Netherlands, Australia and now the United States). In addition I have travelled to many other geographical areas (eg. South Africa, Thailand, India). I have completed various studies (Production Horticulture) and also completed a Master degree (Agribusiness) through the University of Melbourne, Australia.

As per the 1<sup>st</sup> of October I joined Universal Seed Company in Independence as General Manager.

I have been following the canola issue since the start of 2012 and have also been present at the multiple hearings and meetings that have taken place to date. The fact that the ODA feels to allow canola into the valley is something that should be reconsidered. Both long and short term consequences should be taken into account and extensive research has proven the severe issues that one would be dealing with.

Key issues in relation to the specialty seed industry:

- By now, it has been pointed out many times that many specialty seed industry crops belong to the same genus as canola (brassica spp) and that if crops are in close proximity; the genes of one will carry over into another. This is disconcerting to the specialty seed industry since growers will require controlled production patterns to avoid interpollination with brassicas.
- If GM canola pollinates specialty industry seed crops, the seed will be worth much less or basically unsalable into the different markets (Europe, etc.) where stringent laws discourage purchasing GM organisms.
- Increase of pests and diseases that will not only affect brassica crops. Proof as to what happened in other production areas is present. In the past a lot of the valuable hybrid red radish production was done in France. Once canola was introduced, it also lead to the introduction of the pollen beetles. This insect migrates from canola to other flowering crops like radish.

Another issues, I would like to emphasize is the following:

Food security continues to be an ongoing concern and is a subject that can be found on the agenda of various conferences. By 2050, the global population will surpass 9 billion people (Economist, 2012) and agricultural systems will be increasingly challenged by water scarcity, climate change and volatility. We all also know that the question that continues to come up is – will we be able to produce enough food for all?

Think about this question again and try to understand the unique characteristics of the Willamette Valley and its important role in the global specialty seed industry.

The agronomy that is associated with growing specialty seed crops shouldn't be underestimated and it really is true that the number of areas where specialty seed crops can be grown is continuously reduced. High value brassica crops are mainly being grown in the Willamette Valley and eg. Tasmania, Australia.

Research has also proven that land availability is a determinant factor for agriculture production. Only a third of the earth's soil is suitable for agriculture. 30% of this arable soil is expected to experience erosion by 2050 due to unsustainable agricultural practices (Pimentel and Kendall, 1994).

The bottom line is that the Willamette Valley should be considered as a unique area in the global specialty seed industry and should treasure its unique characteristics. Growers that would like to use Canola as a rotation crop will definitely not be able to compete against the major markets in Canada and Europe whereas the specialty seed industry will be able to continue to contribute to the long term future of the Willamette Valley.

Sincerely,



Sandra Verlaat