

LINN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



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Testimony of Commissioner Will Tucker
SB 633
Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
March 12, 2013

Thank you Chair Roblan and Committee members for the opportunity to address this body.

As a Linn County Commissioner, an advocate for local control, as someone who believes less government is the best form of government, I'm not usually asking for Salem or Washington to take on an issue, but if there was ever an argument for why the state or the feds should take an issue, control of GMO is the issue.

Yesterday my fellow commissioners at the AOC Legislature Committee voted to also support SB 633. Their concerns mirror my own; costs, expertise and the potential for different rules and regulations by counties or even cities.

Genetically modified organisms have been around since man first started farming and ranching. We've been cross breeding, selective breeding now DNA technologies agriculture has been working to higher yield, new products, with changing flavors, colors or other attributes to match our changing tastes. This is true of all forms of agriculture, silviculture and raising of animals as crops.

I believe that God has given us free will, intelligence, dominion over the animals and flowers of the earth and inquisitive minds to look at solving the challenges. For centuries GMO was limited to hybridizing, with early leaders like Burpee.... Where else do we get seedless watermelon... annually there dozens of new varieties of plants.

With the advent of DNA technologies education facilities like OSU and large industrial seed suppliers have new tools to produce better seed solutions. We need these solutions, as we face growing populations, changing climates and farming condition. This has resulted in great things, corn resistant to Roundup, other vegetables resistant to insects, and others that thrive in warmer conditions.

Having said that, most plants we know today have been altered from what we had just a few years ago.

What is being asked of counties and cities is that they have to decide which plant presents risks above the rewards.... What new flower, what new vegetable or fruit should not exist? Yes we do need to protect those who want a organic world, but who has the tools and technologies? Certainly not a county.... We cannot decide what level of change is hybrid verse gene splicing.

As a segment of the population wants organic foods, don't ignore crop science and reduce the capacity of many in the farming industry to work to produce more with less chemicals to feed the world. This industry may need control, and in the US we have it with the USDA and FDA to look at research and establish rules. What tools do County Commissioners have to decide if new variety of a plant is safe? Where do we get the expertise and the labs? Where does a county draw a line, do we go backwards and not accept any variety modified after a certain date in time?

It is a question counties are not ready to answer. Let the organic market define their rules of what is in or not. Farmers have been facing pollen drift of insect carried pollens for years. It will require that farmers work with their neighbors, but the industry has done that for years.

Please support the counties, as we have no definitive way to decide what plant is in or out...please support SB 633.