

Rodney Hightower

Strome-Fisher Farm, Inc.

Junction City, OR

My name is Rodney Hightower and I am a partner in Strome-Fisher Farm located outside of Junction City. I began working on this farm in 1979 and worked into a partnership after graduating with a crop and soil science degree. Our farm grows turf grass seed, grain and specialty seeds like garden peas, sugar beets and hybrid red radishes.

It is my opinion that we need SB 633 to avoid having 36 counties and hundreds of cities in Oregon all with their own rules and regulations covering agriculture. Increasing government regulations are one of the major issues affecting farms and ranches. This issue worries most of my colleagues. For the most part we are small business's working on small profit margins and increased regulations affect our profitability. Our industry is subject to many factors such as weather and market forces that we can't control. Increased regulations can be added to this.

In our state, the Oregon Department of Agriculture is given the authority to regulate Ag. If every county and city started putting onerous regulations on ag producers it would get very complicated as to what crop could be grown where and by whom. In some cases what little competitive advantages we have as producers could be lost. In these lean budget conditions, only the Department of Ag has the personnel and expertise to adequately ensure that the public continues to enjoy a safe and plentiful food supply.

At the federal level we have agencies such as USDA and EPA that regulate agriculture. When new pesticides or modified crops are introduced, they have been scrutinized and studied to ensure that they are safe for consumers and the environment. These new technologies cost their developers millions of dollars in scientific studies.

As taxpayers and citizens we already have agencies that are tasked with our safety and wellbeing. I ask you to pass SB 633 in order to help keep our farms and ranches from increased regulatory pressure and I thank you for your efforts in this regard.