

Testimony In Favor of SB-633

Timothy E. Winn of 3405 NE Garden Avenue, Corvallis, Oregon 97330, in Benton County.


I am a vegetable and specialty seed grower, operating approximately 550 acres of production, about 2 miles Northeast of Corvallis. Included in my crop profile and rotation are 40 to 50 acres each season of sugar beets for seed. My family has produced sugar beet seed on this farm for West Coast Sugar Beet Seed Co. for nearly 50 years. Currently, revenue from sugar beet seed amounts to between 12 and 15 percent of my farm's gross income each year. Yielding approximately 20 percent of my farm's annual net income, this crop is very important to the financial sustainability of my farming operation.

Beginning three years ago, we were asked to begin producing sugar beet seed containing the "Round-up Ready" genetically engineered technology. Industry competition and demand had made it necessary to convert from traditional genetics in order to minimize pesticide use and cost. I was familiar with the GMO technology and had spent considerable time and energy to research the issues and potential problems that growing a genetically modified crop might cause for my farm. Through my inquiries I became convinced that GMO technology had been greatly screened and reviewed by appropriate Federal and State authorities, using years of scientific research and observation. In addition, it was apparent to me that the methods and procedures, both new and established in the sugar beet seed industry, would assure that no problems would arise from the production of Genetically Modified Sugar Beet Seed on my farm, for me or any of my neighbors. In fact, over the last three crop years, we have no adverse consequences of producing seed containing GMO technology.

The possible creation of, County or municipal, laws or rules which would prevent the production of crops containing GMO technology would create an economic burden for farmers in my position. A burden which science and years of review by state and federal authorities has determined is not warranted or necessary. If I were to lose the opportunity to produce sugar beet seed it would cost my farm business approximately 10 percent of its net income. That would be a significant loss to adsorb for a, small, family business.

The Agricultural Industry has good safeguards put on it at the state and federal levels to assure safe and responsible production of our nation's food supply. It is not wise, or fair, to add fear-driven or emotionally motivated rules, regulation or limitations at local levels, such as those of counties or municipalities. Farmers, such as myself, need the protection from misguided restrictions on our cropping options that might arise from efforts of small, local, special interest groups. Senate Bill #633 would provide an environment which would protect against this type of local over regulation. People of differing philosophies and policy preferences will always have an opportunity to be heard and considered in discussions at the state and federal law and rulemaking process. Therefore, Senate Bill #633 would help to assure adherence to a good process in determining the safe use of GMO technology. Farmers need the protection that Senate Bill #633 would provide.

Respectfully Submitted,


Timothy E. Winn, Oregon Farmer