

February 11, 2014

Oregon State House of Representatives  
Rules Committee  
Hearing on HB 4100

Testimony of Stuart O'Neill, Executive Director, Rogue Farm Corps

Dear Chair Hoyle and members of the committee,

Rogue Farm Corps (RFC) is an Oregon non-profit with a mission to train the next generation of farmers and ranchers. We serve a growing population of beginning farmers seeking entry into the field of sustainable agriculture. RFC trains farmers at host sites in the Rogue and South Willamette Valleys and will be expanding into the Portland Metro Area and Central Oregon next year. Many of our graduates are running farm businesses in Oregon. The future of Oregon's agricultural economy will be determined by this new generation of farmers and ranchers using ecologically and humane farming practices. RFC stands opposed to the use and propagation of GE seeds and crops.

Oregon State's GE food labeling bill (**HB 4100**) would allow Oregon citizens to vote on a ballot initiative that would require that foods that are produced using genetic engineering (GE) be labeled as such. If passed via legislation and via voters, this initiative would provide the consumers of Oregon with the right to know how their food is produced.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not require the labeling of genetically engineered foods. Unlike more than 64 other countries, the U.S. does not have a law specifically focused on overseeing genetically engineered organisms, or their labeling. In the absence of such a federal law, states such as Oregon have a duty to their citizens, their environment, and their agricultural economy to enact such a law.

Oregon citizens should have the choice to avoid purchasing foods that are genetically engineered if they choose to do so for environmental, health, economic, religious or ethical reasons. If enacted into law, HB 4100 would provide them with this choice.

Further, because there is yet no mandatory labeling of GE foods, health professionals have no way of tracking if these foods are causing adverse health effects. HB 4100 would provide health professionals with a way to track any adverse health effects from ingesting GE foods.

In sum, the intention of HB 4100 is to allow Oregon citizens to vote for an initiative that would require that foods that are produced using genetic engineering be labeled as such. The initiative is intended to provide Oregon consumers with information about the foods they purchase that is currently hidden. Since FDA has to date refused to label GE foods, it is up to individual states to lead the way and protect this state's interests, including its public's health, its public's right to know, its agricultural economy, its farmers and its native ecosystems.

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Thank you for your consideration and your Yes vote on HB 4100.

Sincerely,

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