

February 11, 2014

Oregon State House of Representatives
Rules Committee
Hearing on HB 4100

Testimony of Charles Tilt, Owner, Hummingbird Wholesale

Dear Chair Hoyle and members of the committee,

My business, Hummingbird Wholesale, does approximately 6 million dollars worth of business in the Pacific Northwest and employs 40 workers. We have been in business since 1972. We sell Organically certified semi-perishable food products and about 25% of the dollar value of what we sell is sourced in the state of Oregon.

Our business represents a customer base that are staunch advocates for healthy people and a healthy planet. From our perspective and that of our customers, choosing an organically certified product is currently the only alternative to consuming non-GMO food products, since 80% of the manufactured foods produced today contain GMO ingredients.

If, as the GMO industry asserts, food containing GMOs is safe, then why not list GMOs on food labels along with the other ingredients required to be labeled? The GMO industry has claimed that GMO labeling will increase the cost of food for consumers. This is the same argument the food industry used when nutritional labeling became a federal law in 1990. The industry adapted then and it will adapt now. Competition, not labeling, will affect the price consumers pay.

On the other hand, if GMOs pose possible health risks, then GMOs should be labeled to enable consumers the choice of whether or not to purchase products. For example, food that is processed in facilities where peanuts are also processed is labeled to alert consumers with food allergies. Also, sugar and fat content appear on food labels to provide consumers with information they desire to make healthful food choices.

Multiple national surveys have been conducted about GMO labeling and the consumer's right to know what's in our food. The results have been fairly consistent: [more than 90% of Americans](#) are in favor of knowing when they are eating foods made with genetically modified ingredients.

While the companies that sell GMO seeds to farmers insist that their products are safe for people, animals, and the environment, there is [an active debate among scientists about whether or not there is sufficient data to support that conclusion](#). Since the government continues to rely on the industry to determine whether or not their products are safe, there is little objective research available on the topic.

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 and that has potential health risks. 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.

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

Sincerely,

Charles Tilt, Hummingbird Wholesale
