

Honorable Val Hoyle, Chairwoman
House Committee on Rules
State of Oregon

12 February 2014

Subject: HB 4100

Chairwoman Hoyle and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for having me here today. My name is Brenda Frketich and I'm a third generation farmer from St. Paul. My 1,000 acre sustainable farm grows wheat, grass seed, clover, hazelnuts and vegetables. While I don't grow any GMO crops now, I think that the future of agriculture not only in Oregon but in the nation is moving towards using new technology.

I am against the labeling of GMOs for a few reasons. Even as a farmer who doesn't currently rely on GM technology for the specific crops on my farm, I can see that labeling will quickly add to the level of fear and emotion that people have behind the subject of GMOs in their food. And in turn I feel like it will put farmers in this state at a terrible disadvantage. Not just in a marketing sense, but also for future research. Right now being a grower in mostly specialty crops, research for our sector is not being funded. Not because those development can't help our industry, but because fear has caused consumers to move away from those products that are produced using GMO technology.

A good example of this is in the hazelnut industry. Oregon has a long tradition of growing hazelnuts, we actually produce 98% of the US hazelnuts right there in this state. About 25 to 30 years ago blight came into our area and started to kill off our orchards, today we rely on anywhere from 4 to 5 sprays a year along with hours and hours of pruning to keep our trees healthy, and even then for many of our orchards it's a losing battle. As many of you have possibly seen there has been a boom in planting, because Oregon State University, after 20 years of research has come up with a gene that can be bred in the trees to help resist the blight, moving that number of sprays down to one, maybe even zero! This is great for our industry and for our state to be competitive on a worldwide level, but it took 20 years to get this research done. Research that could have been accomplished much faster if the money for gene mapping technology could have been available. Not to mention the continual amount of research that could have continued to take place in the past 2 decades helping us work to combat pests such as filbert worm or the stink bug that continues to plague our orchards today. These are the types of advances that we need to be researching and working towards, if you start to play into the fear of the use of GMOs however, these dollars for research will never come forward.

In business to be successful you have to produce a high quality product, while at the same time trying to be the lowest cost producer. And while GMO has time and time again proven to be a safe and not nutritionally different than their non-GMO counterparts I think that this option of being able to grow GMO crops in the future will be instrumental in farming here in Oregon. If you start to add labels to the food which farmers produced, in a healthy, sustainable way, usually more sustainable than compared to their non GMO counterparts, you are now taking away some of the marketing advantage that those farmers rely on.