From: Anthony Boutard
To: Trant Lindsay; Davidson Ian
Subject: HB 2674 and HB 2675
Date: Wednesday, March 04, 2015 6:52:37 PM

Dear Chair Clem and Members of the Committee;

I am writing to express the need for greater state regulation over genetically modified organisms (GMOs) released into the environment, and specifically crops that are so modified. HB 2674 and 2675 are a very cautious step in that direction, and I support their passage.

As certified organic growers of seed crops, our efforts are constantly threatened by genetic trespass. Our corn varieties, for example, represent more than a decade of careful selection for adaptation to the Pacific Northwest climate, and strong growth under organic management. That is, without the need for insecticides, fungicides and herbicides. Organic seed companies want us to produce more seed them. Our corn varieties have been tested for contamination by GMO corn varieties and are still clean. Testing seed crops is expensive, and if the result is positive we lose the value of the crop, and more than ten years of careful breeding. There is no way to erase or cover up the damage, it is done and our work is completely destroyed. Our organic certifier, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, would prohibit us from selling it as certified seed.

In the Willamette Valley and Rogue Valley with their small area and dense pattern of cropping, open range rules for GMO crops are economically destructive to certain sectors of agriculture, and not just the organic growers, also specialty seed growers and crops grown for the export markets. Those agricultural sectors are well established in the state. Oregon is fifth in the nation in terms of number of certified organic farms, and one of the top seed-producing regions in the world. We need the equivalent of a fenced pasture here, in other words keep your modified genes on your own land.

The argument that modified genes are legal doesn't cut it. Cattle, bison, goats and sheep are legal but the state does not sanction our neighbor's livestock trespassing on our land and destroying the value of our crops. In our part of the state, livestock must be fenced, and if one damages our crops, the owner is liable for damage to our person or property. Unfortunately, in the case of genetic trespass, the state government has failed to show leadership or concern for growers who are put at economic risk.

Just as with fencing livestock in the valley, the burden should fall to the entity profiting from the wandering genes, not the victim of such carelessness. The companies producing GMO seed have the tools and expertise at their disposal to produce seed lines that would not pollute non-GE seed lines with their pollen. Cytoplasmic male sterility is one practical solution if the patent holding companies put to their mind to it. But they are not going to do it if they don't have to.

I urge you all to work on this tepid first step, and produce a sound and fair regulatory framework that works for all farmers. We need well-defined and regulated control areas to protect the larger farming community.

Thank you the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Sincerely,

Anthony Boutard
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