

Testimony on HB 3382
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The Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association (WVSSA) has a long history of seeking genetic purity among numerous specialty seed crops in the Willamette Valley. This includes all members of the Crucifer group, such as radish and the many species found in the Brassica genus, including cabbage and its relatives, as well as canola. Canola is somewhat unique because of its oilseed properties for industrial, edible, and in more recent times biofuel use, in other words, for its non-seed growing applications.

The potential for industrial canola to contaminate, or poison, edible canola was a primary reason for the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to establish control areas beginning in 1990. The ODA adopted rules that also included protection of seed crops of related species based largely on pest and disease considerations. Numerous reviews and adjustments to the rules were made until an impasse developed between the WVSSA and ODA early in 2013 and legislation ensued. At that time ODA loosened some of the restrictive rules related to the Willamette Valley, which had been largely a control district that excluded canola. That exclusion existed in various forms for over 20 years and supported a large expansion of world-renowned Crucifer seed production. Except for this exclusion that originated in state government, the WVSSA operates on the principle of voluntary coexistence.

The purpose of the 2013 legislation was to set up guidelines and funds for research to address the short and long term effects of canola grown not for seed, but for oilseed, with its much higher tolerance for genetic impurity.

Beyond numerous agronomic questions to be addressed in research, ODA in 2010 summarized other considerations in maintaining a control district as follows:

1. The appropriate use of the ODA's control district authority as it relates to pests and diseases.
2. The unique character of the Willamette Valley for specialty seed production.
3. The number of fresh vegetable operations, including smaller farm operations whose markets include local buyers, all of which could be negatively impacted by canola pests and diseases.
4. The opportunity to grow canola in many other regions in Oregon.

These considerations remain and have not changed.

The argument of the WVSSA today is that HB 2427 set in motion a plan for comprehensive research and reporting. HB 2427 was based on a 6-year plan and the outcome of the research is not yet known. WVSSA would argue that we should not add controversy to what has been controversial off and on for years. WVSSA opposes HB 3382.