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Subject: Opposition to HB 4122

In 2013 the Oregon legislature passed SB 863 preempting local governments from imposing restrictions on crops, especially those that are genetically modified or engineered. Subsequently, the Governor formed a diverse statewide task force that met many times throughout 2014 and in which I participated. The Governor stated that a primary purpose of the task force was to reduce conflict between biotech and conventional crops. He had hopes of legislating that reduction in conflict, though most of the perceived conflict was and remains ideological.

After many hours of work group effort from several stakeholders on all sides in the 2015 regular session, including me, and after several hearings on bills written to restrict biotechnology, the eventual outcome was passage of HB 2509. This bill was largely crafted in the work group. In essence HB 2509 strengthens mediation program services available through the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Persons who felt that local crop production might or did interfere with their farming practices had a clearer path to bring neighbors together to discuss a resolution.

Recently, the Oregon Department of Agriculture set a meeting of a Rule Advisory Committee for HB 2509 for February 17, 2016. I will participate on that committee as representatives of diverse farming practices come together to discuss implementation of HB 2509. Consistent with SB 863, this bill is intended to maintain a state wide platform for coexistence.

Now, before we are given an opportunity to fully implement HB 2509, we are faced with new legislation intended to allow the regulation of crops and their products locally. This seems to be counter-intuitive to HB 2509 and based on ideology that restricts coexistence rather than supports it. Potential local restrictions impair the seed industry by making future seed production opportunities subject to limitations or bans. Predictability of quality seed production is central to the terrific international reputation that the Oregon seed industry prospers from.

Let's continue to support coexistence of diverse crops and farming systems in Oregon. I oppose adding the legislative restrictions found in HB 4122.