



Employee and Grower Owned • Promoting Health through Organic Agriculture as a Leading Sustainable Organization

February 9, 2016

To: House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Effectiveness
ATTN: Victoria Cox
Re: Hearing on House Bill 4122

Dear Members of the Committee,

We urge you to support HB 4122. The State of Oregon has failed to protect farmers from unwanted contamination from genetically engineered crops, which leaves farmers vulnerable to economic damages and infringes on their rights to farm with traditional seeds. In 2013, SB 863 should never have been included in the legislative package which stripped local communities of these rights. In the subsequent two years, the Governor failed to meet his commitment to make substantive progress on GMO issues at the state level via the GMO Task Force and the Department of Agriculture.

Unwanted transgenetic contamination is a *very real* issue for Oregon farmers, particularly those who utilize organic practices, as the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) standards strictly prohibit organic operations from using genetically engineered organisms, and for those who have a vested interest in exports, as many nations in the world have banned the sale of genetically engineered crops. Oregon is unique in that we are one of the foremost regions in the world for growing vegetable seed and we are a strong exporter of agricultural products (e.g. wheat & alfalfa). Oregon is 5th in the nation in total organic acres (204,166 acres), with a 93% increase in acreage between 2008 and 2014; Oregon is 4th in the nation in organic farmgate sales, valued at \$237 million, a 52% increase between 2008 and 2014. Consumers in many markets increasingly have concern over GMO contamination, and will reject products if there is a threat of contamination, and many buyers are now instituting mandatory testing before buying products. Farmers wishing to grow traditional, GE-free crops bear the unfair burden of needing to implement extraordinary measures to try to prevent contamination of their land, crops, and seed stock from the risk of cross-pollination and cross-contamination from GE crops.

In the absence of a comprehensive statewide framework, voters and local governments should be able to address issues with genetically engineered crops in their communities in order to protect their local food systems, producers, and economies, and to determine their economic and agricultural future.

I wish these comments to be submitted as testimony for public hearing.

Natalie Reitman-White
Senior Director of Organizational Vitality & Sustainability
Organically Grown Company

Organically Grown Company (OGC) was founded over 30 years ago and today is the largest distributor of organic fruits and vegetables in the Pacific Northwest. Our business is owned by regional farmers and employees. Currently, OGC works with more than 500 grower/vendors and serves over 250 natural and fine food stores and restaurants located throughout western Oregon and Washington, as well as retail and wholesale accounts in other western states and Canada.