

TESTIMONY before the Oregon House of Representatives
Consumer Protection and Government Effectiveness Committee
Relating to HB 4122

DATE:
FEB 9,
2016

- Hi my name is Chris Hardy and I'm here today to express my personal support as a southern Oregon farmer for HB 4122.

I am also on the board of the Southern Oregon Seed Growers Association or SOSGA and will offer several comments on SOSGA's behalf but SOSGA as an organization does not support or oppose any legislation and is not inherently opposed to genetically engineered crops.

I support HB 4122 because I think local farmers and local governments should have the right to protect farmers raising crops that are not genetically engineered from contamination by genetically engineered crops.

4122 allows for local democratic process as it relates to GMOs - nothing more, nothing less.

If genetically engineered crops stayed where they were planted I would not likely be here today. But they don't. If my seed crop is contaminated by pollen from a genetically engineered crop I'm breaking federal patent law if I try to sell it or re-plant it. Also, I don't know of any buyers who would buy a crop if I told them it was tainted with GMOs I didn't have the patent rights to.

In 2012 I was growing beet and Swiss chard seeds when I first learned that Syngenta was growing genetically engineered sugar beet seeds near my farm. It is well documented that pollen from GMO sugar beets can cross-pollinate beet and Swiss chard and make any resulting seeds illegal to sell or plant.

Like almost all genetically engineered crops being commercially grown, these sugar beets were engineered so that they could be sprayed with significant amounts of herbicide and still survive. I mention that, simply because it conflicts with the public relations notion that GMO-crops on the market today have been engineered for drought tolerance or added nutrition. That is simply not true.

After learning about Syngenta's GMO sugar beets, myself and other members of the Southern Oregon Seed Growers Association (SOSGA) worked over several months to negotiate with Syngenta regarding the likely contamination of our seed crops. After over 6 months of meetings with Syngenta they eventually sent their attorney out to announce they would no longer talk with us. That was the end of the "farmer to farmer" negotiations.

Myself and numerous other farmers were ultimately forced to tear out or plow under our crops. Contamination was too great of a risk. It was not a

viable option to wait two years for our crops to mature only to confirm they were worthless.

On behalf of SOSGA I can say that our organization believes that there is no realistic basis for saying that farmer to farmer communications, pinning or other voluntary systems will adequately protect farmers growing traditional crops from GMO contamination.

The argument real local laws aren't needed sounds good, but it isn't reality.

If Oregon wants to have crops and agriculture that is not owned and patented by a very small number of very big companies we need to let local governments work with local farmers to adopt laws to protect farmers from GMOs.

As a farmer growing traditional crops I need your help with support HB 4122.

Thank you

