

Dear House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources Members,

I am writing to urge you all to **oppose** HB2469.

In this day and age, one American farmer provides for the food needs of 155 mouths on average. And it is hard for those who have never farmed for a living to understand the myriad challenges these workers and producers face. They need our *support* at every turn, certainly not our hindrance.

Many farmers have already submitted testimony describing the impact that this bill could have on their livelihood. Allowing patchwork restrictions that vary from county to county — the boundaries of which often cut through a single planted field — will pose a veritable nightmare to farmers who already have quite more than enough on their plate during the course of making their living feeding *all* of us.

This is only one of many reasons why any regulation in this area is far more effectively rendered at the state level rather than by the local governments which generally lack both the resources and the exceedingly specialized knowledge to handle such a complex and nuanced affair as the business of agriculture.

If you already oppose this bill, then I thank you for your resolve in standing up for both the farmers *and* the scientists who are continuously finding new ways to provide more food with less input and with less environmental impact.

If you are uncertain about this bill, then I strongly encourage you to explore its ramifications from those who know the most about the best modern agricultural methods that it would encumber: the farmers who use these solutions and the scientists who have dedicated their lives to studying and developing them.

If you are planning on supporting this bill, then I entreat you to take a step back to reconsider your rationale in doing so, and to carefully examine the elements of the debate that may have brought you to this position. And after you give this the level of honest scrutiny that such a crucial issue as this deserves, I sincerely beseech you to make that most courageous choice, the decision to change your mind.

I offer my testimony today not as a farmer nor as a scientist but, perhaps surprisingly, as one who has volunteered as an activist for both the environment and social justice for almost thirty years. Only five years ago, I myself was “Marching Against Monsanto.” Not merely as a participant, mind you, but as one of the folks carrying a bullhorn and leading the chants.

Why the turnaround? In all of my years of activism, I always considered it of tantamount importance that I base my actions upon the best information available and upon the most solid reasoning possible. And as I found myself surrounded by all the wide-ranging anti-GMO soundbites in the crowd, I realized that something just wasn't adding up. There was a palpable cognitive dissonance to the rhetoric that I was actively helping promote, and I knew the burden was upon myself to take a deeper look.

And now five years hence, I can honestly state, unequivocally and in no uncertain terms, that the anti-GMO campaign represents one of the most seriously deceptive campaigns and misguided efforts I have ever witnessed up close as an activist.

I do not doubt the good intentions of my peers who disagree with me on this. We *all* want a sustainable planet and a healthy food supply for ourselves and our lived ones alike. But the misinformation surrounding biotechnology is so egregious that it is all-too-frequently seeming as if reality has been turned completely on its head. Indeed, I would be hard-pressed to find any other controversy in which the reigning ideological hegemony from my own political neck of the woods could be more aptly described as sheerly Orwellian.

For instance, many detractors of best farming practices — some of whom have also offered you testimony on this same bill — reveal themselves to be almost categorically under the illusion that transgenic crops pose a threat either by dangers of human consumption or by a perceived increase of pesticides necessitated by these innovative strains.

Both notions fly in the face of the real world. Regarding the first matter, practically every single credible scientific body in the world attests to the safety of bioengineered food. The “jury is still out” only for the uninformed public, not for those versed in the science.

Regarding the second notion, people who oppose transgenic breeding methods because of the supposed “more dangerous chemicals” thought to be engendered by them are quite surprised to learn that, much to the contrary, the farming methods facilitated by many of these strains result in a *significant reduction* in pesticides needed; on the whole, pesticide use has dropped by 37% as a result of this technology.

Alleviation of large amounts of heinous chemical applications is not the only environmental benefit to be thwarted if we allow well-intentioned yet misinformed partisans to prohibit modern farming. I think we could all confidently predict that every person lobbying here against transgenic crops would agree, almost to a person, that climate change is both a reality and a dilemma. How then, are they to rectify the fact that this technology they are relentlessly denigrating is one that is already significantly reducing the carbon footprint of agriculture?

“No-till farming” is greatly enabled by the traits of some of the very crops that would be banned if we are to let uninformed popular opinion dictate against the expertise and experience of the professionals who grow our food. And no-till farming not only cuts down on fossil fuels in farming but is also a substantial mitigator of soil erosion and the related water pollution.

In serving us as Oregon representatives, I imagine that it is nearly impossible to find the time to fully investigate every piece of legislation that comes across your desks. But as members of the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, I hope you will take the time to look into this particular matter thoroughly, because the stakes are so grave.

Please do not take my word for any of this, but rather look to the research which is widely available. Upon request I would be happy to share a variety of resources who can provide much more clarification, citation, and supplementation to all of the claims to which I have testified herein. A great place to start would be the Cornell Alliance For Science, a group of researchers young and old from all over the world who are educating the public on this important field of discovery while developing crops that not only alleviate burdens for American farmers but which

also provide life-saving technologies for farmers in the developing world who struggle daily with blight and drought.

I also highly recommend this acclaimed speech to the Oxford Farming Conference by Mark Lynas, one of the world's preeminent climate change correspondents and a former anti-GMO activist who similarly changed his mind once he learned about both the science and the diverse environmental and health benefits offered by the very crops that he himself had once vandalized.

But more importantly than anything, and if nothing else, I implore all of you to read this impassioned and incredibly articulate testimony given by a farmer in Boulder County, Colorado who is now facing the exact sort of situation that many Oregon farmers could very likely face themselves if their already-difficult jobs are allowed to be further impeded by the whims of a popular opinion demonstrating scant regard to either the science or farming involved.

Thank you for your time in reading this and for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Respectfully and gratefully,

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