

## **Dear Members House Committee On Agriculture and Natural Resources**

### **Please OPPOSE HB 2469 and Protect Oregon Farmers**

Please let me introduce myself. My name is Charles Boyer and I live at 11630 Agate Road, Eagle Point, Oregon 97524. My telephone is [541-826-9873](tel:541-826-9873). My wife and I are family farmers in Jackson County and have lived on and worked our farm since 1991. I currently live in the only county in Oregon where it is illegal to grow crops that are legal under Federal Law but legal to grow crops that are illegal to grow under Federal Law. I am asking you to not let this happen in other counties across the State.

The County Law was passed on emotional issues rather than science by primarily urban people influenced by claims that can be debunked if one takes the time and energy to do the research. It was an attack on “big agriculture” and corporations by a few organic farmers who claimed that allowing genetically modified (GM) crops to be grown in Jackson County would put them out of business. Sounds really bad but let’s look at the real facts.

By removing my ability to take advantage of GM crops they have in effect taken my ability to farm my land in a manner that will allow me to be more economically viable and unable to take advantage of better, hardier, and more productive plant materials.

You must remember there are currently only 10 federally approved GM crops in the United States and only 8 of those have a potential to be grown in Oregon. I don’t think we are going to be growing any papayas or cotton here anytime soon. Then not every approved plant will cross pollinate with many of the crops grown by organic farmers growing produce. And even if there is a chance of cross pollination, the two farms have to be with in close proximity and it is only an issue if the organic farm is saving their own seed.

So here are some facts consider about what really is the agricultural picture in Jackson County according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. In 2012 there were 31 registered and approved organic farms in Jackson

County. There were a total of 1722 farms in Jackson County in 2012. The total income generated from organic farms was \$3,364,000 in 2012 compared to \$64,127,000 from the rest of agriculture in Jackson County. So we passed a law in our county to protect 2% of the farms from the remaining 98% of the farms most of which would never be close enough to an organic farm to ever impact what they were growing. However those 2% have directly impacted the farming practices and future economic wellbeing of the other 98% of the Jackson County farms. As for as the economic impacts, it is important to understand that not all organic crops are or can be cross pollinated with approved GM crops. In 2012 organic crops were responsible for roughly 5% of the total farm income in Jackson County. The remaining 95% were from non-organic operations across the county. While most all organic farms are on class 1 irrigated soils, many of the non-organic farms are on class 2 and 3 irrigated and non-irrigated soils. So the incomes percentages are not directly comparable. However, I do know of several farms that were growing GM alfalfa to provide a lower lignin forage crop that have stopped producing that crop in order to comply with the county law.

So please do not pass this bill and allow uninformed urban folks to be duped by the hysteria and place similar restrictions on agriculture across the State of Oregon.

Sincerely yours,

Charlie

Charles L. Boyer