



TESTIMONY

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources

March 16, 2017

OFB Opposes HB 2469 - Local Regulation of Seed Disadvantages ALL Farmers

Chair Clem and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Farm Bureau Federation (OFB) asks you to oppose HB 2469. HB 2469 undermines the state seed preemption law. It would allow local governments to regulate agricultural seed if that seed is genetically engineered (GE). ***This could result in a patchwork of 36 different county regulations and over 400 city regulations on seed.***

By way of background, OFB is Oregon's largest grassroots agriculture association, representing 7,000 farming and ranching families across the state. Our mission is to promote educational improvement, economic opportunity, and social advancement for our members and the farming, ranching, and natural resources industry as a whole.

OFB has long supported all types of agriculture in Oregon: organic, conventional, GE, and Identity Preserved. We also have been proponents of land use zoning that protects agricultural areas. A key component of this protection has always been ensuring a consistent regulatory pattern for agriculture in the state. Allowing local regulation of GE crops would subject farmers to multiple regulatory regimes—this would be a regulatory nightmare for farmers and ranchers who have land in multiple counties or bifurcate county lines.

Farmers need certainty as they determine what to grow. Decisions about planting are frequently made a year, if not years, in advance. Allowing for a patchwork of local regulations on GE seed could undermine significant investments made by farmers in their operations, potentially causing farmers to have to tear out crops and lose their investment due to restrictions imposed mid-growing season.

HB 2469 would give cities and counties the ability to regulate agricultural crops, even though they are not equipped to do so. That expertise resides at the federal level and at the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration currently regulate GE plants and have years of studies demonstrating that GE products are safe. Commercialized GE crops have been determined not to be substantially different from

other crops and pose no unique risks to neighboring growers. HB 2469 would allow cities and counties to decide what crops farmers are allowed to grow, even though they lack the expertise to regulate agriculture.

OFB supports the development and utilization of new and existing practices and technologies to benefit agriculture; we recognize that all production methods are important. It is for this reason that we oppose HB 2469. HB 2469 vilifies technological advancements, picks winners and losers among farmers, and creates a confusing patchwork of seed polices for farmers and ranchers to navigate.

OFB respectfully asks you to oppose HB 2469 and uphold the seed preemption law.