

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
Feral Farm Testimony in Support of SB 1037  
Hearing April 12, 2017.

My name is Jonathan Gunn, and I started Feral farm with my partner in Provolt. We are in our first season in 2017. We produce organic vegetable seed on contract for companies specializing in organic seed. As beginning, first-generation farmers in Josephine County, growing organic vegetable seed is an economically viable path for us, and one that would be far less viable without a ban on GMO crops. In order to produce certified organic seed as required by our contracts, there can be no trace of genetically engineered material in the seeds we produce. The National Organic Program has a zero tolerance for GMO material. With more types of GMO crops produced each year, the number of seed crops we can produce organically is diminished.

With the demand for organic food increasing steadily each year and now growing faster than the domestic supply, there is a growing need not only for organic farmers, but for certified organic seed farmers that can meet the demand for seed to supply the growing market. Many important food crops that grow well here, such as corn, squash, and beets, have large isolation distance requirements due to windborn pollen that can travel up to several miles.

Josephine county is an ideal region for the production of organic vegetable seed. We are in a protected valley with fertile soils, and long dry summers that are critical for producing good seed yields. There already exist many small scale, family sized organic seed farms whose businesses would be greatly impacted by the presence of genetically engineered pollen.

Our valley is largely made up of small, family scale farms, whereas GMO crops are more conducive to industrial scale farms. Local consumers value the culture of family-scale farms and organic food grown from organic seed, and should be allowed to make choices about agricultural production that are based on their values.

A ban on GMOs would create a real opportunity to boost the local economy, and there are many young and beginning farmers such as ourselves in Josephine County that are motivated to create new businesses and jobs in the organic industry.

Please support SB 1037.