

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Hearing date: April 12, 2017

Testimony from Rob Pell, Owner of Sunshine Natural Foods, Grants Pass, SUPPORT OF SB 1037

I'm writing to ask you to support SB 1037. This bill will be very good for the present and future of our Josephine County economy. Ten or 20 years ago this may not have been the case. However the future of sustainable profits from local agriculture is proving to be all about a commitment to organic, which means among other things, non-GMO growing methods.

As I'm sure you are aware, SB 1037 provides the legal means for JoCo to enforce the Genetically Engineered Plant Ordinance passed by the local voters. I voted for it. The freedom for local farmers to be able grow, produce, and sell truly organic, non-GMO foods is one of the most important local issues for me.

SB 1037 will protect family farmers in JoCo from the threat of contamination from pollen drift. Pollen drift is unequivocally unavoidable and through no fault of their own often renders the efforts of organic farmers virtually worthless. This is especially true for local organic seed producers who sell their seeds all over the country. These seeds are often scientifically tested to ensure there are no traces of GMOs.

The Grants Pass Grower's Market provides an interesting study.

I would estimate that 15 years ago there were generally 2 or 3 booths there weekly centered around locally produced organic produce and artisan foods. While the Grower's market still has a few booths focused on conventionally produced foods (delicious donuts, hot dogs and the like) it is absolutely abundant and bursting with locally produced organic items. Organic has basically become the reason the majority of shoppers go there. One look anytime from May thru Oct. is all it takes to verify that point.

Another point of interest. At my business, Sunshine Natural Foods in Grants Pass, we have featured an organic salad bar for over 2 decades. Until recently it was impossible for us to place standing weekly orders with local organic farmers for 3 or 4 cases of lettuce and other vegetables even during the summer. They couldn't reliably deliver in quantity. We had to import produce from the Willamette valley.

The last 2 to 3 years local organic farmers have been able to fulfill many more of our needs with consistent weekly deliveries of hundreds of pounds of beautiful produce. Organic farming has fully arrived in JoCo.

In conclusion, I would hope that you sponsor and support SB 1037. It is a long-term step you can take to help bolster and ensure that JoCo economy has an industry that continues to thrive and expand.

Truly,
Rob Pell
Owner, Sunshine Natural Foods, Grants Pass