



February 7, 2019

Testimony for Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources – Canola Coexistence

Dear Co Chair Taylor, Co Chair Reardon and Members of the Committee:

My name is Amy Wong and I represent a coalition of non-profit organizations active in agriculture issues in Oregon. I am writing in response to testimony that the committee heard regarding the ODA budget this week.

During testimony on February 5, 2019 at approximately one hour and 17 minutes into the committee hearing, ODA Director Taylor answered questions about special projects that are based out of the director's office, including canola co-existence. Rep. Holvey and Sen. Taylor both asked follow up questions about how ODA resources from the General Fund are used to fund the canola co-existence special project, and if co-existence is possible without some sort of state intervention, as well as what the environmental, and other, ramifications will be from increasing canola acreage in the Willamette Valley.

Director Taylor responded that while there will always be co-existence challenges between canola and specialty seeds, it is ODA's opinion that it has been shown that these challenges can be overcome and canola can be grown without threatening the specialty seed industry.

Our coalition is concerned that not all aspects of co-existence have been discussed or investigated thoroughly, namely the potential introduction of genetically engineered (GE) canola, and we want to ensure that the canola co-existence special project is considered, and has adequate funding, because of the serious threats that canola and GE canola pose to a wide variety of organic and conventional vegetable seeds through cross contamination, as well as increased pest and disease pressures. We would like to make sure that the specialty seed industry is given a value and have that value compared to theoretical canola crop values to determine if potentially harming the specialty seed industry is warranted.

There are many places in the world where canola can be grown and specialty seed cannot, and these zones are where large-scale canola production should take place—not amidst high-value vegetable seed acreage. Further, the contamination that flows from canola crops to specialty seed crops is a one-way contamination that burdens only the seed industry.

The vegetable specialty seed industry is worth more than \$50 million annually and an acre of organic seed can yield between \$10,000 and \$40,000 per acre. Canola, at best, can yield \$1500. As the demand for organic seed grows, Oregon's special position as one of the top five seed growing regions in the world means the state has the potential to increase organic seed production to meet, in part, this demand. However, there must be protections from GE and other contamination in order to foster this growth into the future.

Of note, on February 6, 2019 Reuters published a story about French and German farmers having to tear out thousands of acres of canola because testing revealed that the seed it was grown from was contaminated with GE canola strains, despite the seed being produced for the European market which does not allow GE crops due to

environmental, and other, concerns. Bayer offered compensation of \$2277.80 per hectare (2.471 acres) to cover the loss of crops this season and next, since farmers will not be able to grow the crop in 2020 as a precaution to avoid the re-emergence of the GE strain found this year. See: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-gmo-bayer-idUSKCN1PV1RG>

Director Taylor mentioned that ODA is forming a rulemaking body to come up with a solution for canola co-existence prior to the ban's sunset. We would like that to request that organic specialty seed growers are represented in this process. If these growers are not represented, I would urge the legislature to do something to protect them. I heard Governor Brown speak in the rotunda on February 6, 2019 about Oregon being a leader in organic agriculture production and wanting to see this market sector continue to grow—this literally should start with organic seed.

Most sincerely,

Amy Wong

Legislative Affairs

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