



"The Voice of Oregon's Wheat Producers Since 1926"



OREGON WHEAT GROWERS LEAGUE

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Blake Rowe, Chief Executive Officer

TO: Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair, Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Members of the Committee

FR: Blake Rowe
CEO, Oregon Wheat Growers League

Date: March 26, 2019

RE: SB 853

The Oregon Wheat Growers League is proud to represent the nearly 2000 farms across Oregon that produce wheat, one of our State's largest and most valuable crops. Wheat contributes hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect value to Oregon's economy, especially Oregon's rural economy. Ninety percent of Oregon's wheat is exported to customers around the world. Both price and quality are keys to our ability to compete for markets and neonicotinoid crop protection products are vital to our competitiveness.

OREGON WHEAT GROWERS NEED ACCESS TO SAFE, AFFORDABLE, AND EFFECTIVE CROP PROTECTION PRODUCTS TO PRODUCE HIGH YIELDING AND HIGH-QUALITY WHEAT CROPS. NEONICOTINOID SEED TREATMENTS ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL TO PROTECT WHEAT SEEDS AND YOUNG WHEAT PLANTS.

Wheat plants are susceptible to numerous insects and diseases that result in loss of yield and quality. For some destructive soil-borne insects such as wireworms, there are no alternative products for wheat growers. Neonicotinoid seed treatments are the only labeled product for wireworm control in wheat. These seed treatments are also effective in controlling insects like aphids, that attack new wheat plants and transmit diseases like barley yellow dwarf virus.

It is important that Legislators understand that wheat seeds treated with neonicotinoids don't pose any risk to pollinators. Not only are the seeds planted directly into the soil, but wheat also doesn't have traditional "flowers" and depends on wind, not pollinators, for pollination.

We want to be absolutely clear that we see no justification to change neonicotinoids to restricted use products in Oregon. However, if the Legislature decides to move forward and make neonicotinoids restricted use products, it is vital that the Oregon Department of Agriculture be directed to immediately undertake administrative rule making for Oregon to ensure that farmers can continue to access and use the products. We can't afford to have them unavailable for even one growing season, so ODA will need to act immediately.

We urge you to follow the best science and insure that neonicotinoids remain available to Oregon's wheat growers by opposing SB 853.

