

Testimony in support of HB 3026/SB 885  
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I am the manager of West Coast Beet Seed Company located in Salem and we produce sugarbeet seed. I have served on the Boards of several seed associations, including the Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association (WVSSA).

The WVSSA has a long history of developing and implementing a Seed Quality Management Program in order to maximize the genetic purity of the dozens of crops represented by about 50 member companies. The platform for successfully isolating crops with potential to cross pollinate is a Geographic Information System, or electronic map. By itself this map only provides a sketch of information about specialty seed crops. The strength of this isolation system lies in the rules and guidelines that members have developed over several decades of experience and research.

Years ago the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) created rapeseed production districts in Oregon initially designed to “separate and prevent cross-pollination between edible-type (canola) and industrial oil-type rapeseed, and to protect seed crops of related species from cross-pollination”. Ultimately, a Protected District prohibited canola oil crops in the Willamette Valley except by special permit. Under these conditions a robust industry of world-renowned seed production of related crops flourished.

When the ODA decided in 2012 to reduce restrictions on canola, the seed industry objected. Eventually, through legislation, up to 500 acres of canola were allowed to be produced in the former Willamette Valley Protected District for a 6-year period that ends in 2019. During that period research was conducted and the ODA issued a report on the coexistence between canola and specialty seed production last November 15 that offered four options for coexistence.

Through HB 3026/SB 885 the WVSSA is supporting legislation that would codify the continued production of 500 acres of canola annually. This generally aligns with the ODA option that their report identifies as “Extend Current System”. The association exists to manage crops that are grown for seed that is produced for planting. However, canola fields produced for oil purposes were entered into the isolation system during the recent period of production and research and that accommodation could continue with this legislation. The WVSSA created a new Affiliate Membership in order to allow farmers to access the association’s seed production system. This gives producers of oilseed canola similar rights and benefits of association rules and guidelines that seed company members enjoy.

The resolution for coexistence of specialty seed crops with previously regulated canola is messy. Strongly held positions on both sides have not reached common ground in spite of various stakeholder meetings prior to multiple Rules Advisory Committee meetings organized by ODA. To the specialty seed industry HB 3026/SB 885 is a concession to the interest in canola and I ask for your support.