



Wild Garden Seed

Organic Seed from Shoulder to Shoulder Farm

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Regarding the Introduction of Canola to the Willamette Valley
Testimony of Frank Morton/Wild Garden Seed, April 2, 2019

My name is Frank Morton, I reside at 25235 Aurora Lane, Philomath, OR 97370

My wife Karen and I started our specialty organic seed company 25 years ago. We had no idea at the time that we were fortunate enough to have done so in one of the world's finest seed growing regions, with the climate and natural resources to produce the highest quality seeds of a large number of vegetables, herbs, and flowers. It wasn't until we became members of the Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association that I really grasped Oregon's place in the world as a first-class place to grow the most valuable of all agricultural crops—pure seed for planting.

The original rapeseed control districts created to buffer inherent conflicts between oilseed growers and specialty seed growers has worked well for their purpose for more than three decades, during which time Oregon has developed a reputation for the quality, purity, and reliability of its seed production. Along the border with Idaho, restriction of rapeseed production in Oregon protects specialty seed producers inside Idaho. In central Oregon, rapeseed restrictions protect the region's carrot seed producers from persistent oilseed volunteers in agricultural fields whose seeds cannot be separated from the carrot seed crop.

I'm one of very few dedicated organic seed growers in the WVSSA membership. I supply organic growers on every scale directly through my catalog and website in the US, Canada, UK, Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Rim. I also supply seed catalog companies in many of these locations, especially catalogs that supply organic growers. Last year we sold seeds in 41 countries. Despite feeling somewhat significant in my worldly impact, I see that my farm is outside an arbitrary "purple line" proposed by ODA to separate the "heart of the Valley" from so-called "marginal lands." I'm west of the Willamette, a mile south of Philomath, right beside one of the most significant organic produce farms in the state (Gathering Together Farm, with 65 acres of production). Organic growers are often found on "marginal lands." It is what was left to us to build our industry from nothing. Let me be pointed here and say that I think I'm as important as my friends growing seed in the heart of the Valley, and I think I deserve to have my priority pinning rights as respected as anyone who pays dues and pinning fees to WVSSA. But it looks like ODA intends to take this pinning priority that I've maintained for 12 years and do something different as regards pinning outside their "purple box," but

I have no idea what. I'm not feeling the safety of equal protection under the proposed changes. Then again, I feel sleazy asking ODA to gerrymander their arbitrary line just to include me, when I know there are other organic growers outside that line who don't even know that seed crops might fit well in their production systems, and that they are in a world class seed growing region. The purple line not only threatens my future as a seedsman, it precludes many other futures that could have been. This is the tragedy of letting our specialty seed growing region erode around the edges. We won't get that opportunity back to preserve what we now have.

Please take the proper steps to prevent the erosion of Oregon's status as a world class place to grow pure seeds for planting. I suggest we maintain the control district in the Willamette Valley to curtail acreage and production sites for canola, as is already done to benefit seed growers in Central Oregon and Idaho seed growers along the Eastern Oregon border.