

Submitter: Amy Benson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources

Measure: SB789

Chair Gordon and members of the committee:

My husband and I have been vegetable farmers for over 20 years and certified organic for the last 13. The success of our operation relies on quality inputs and this includes the seed we use to grow our crops. By law we cannot use seed that has been intentionally genetically engineered or seed that has been contaminated by unintentional cross pollinating with a genetically engineered crop. The Willamette Valley is one of the vegetable seed capitals of the world, a very special place for growing high-value vegetable seeds. Protecting land for high-value seed growing, and for the many crops that don't interfere with high-value seed growing, like grapes and grasses is an important part of the Willamette Valley's and Oregon's agricultural economy. Rapeseed/canola, a low-value crop, endangers our valuable seed crop industry, and should be grown elsewhere. Rapeseed/canola cultivation can happen in many agricultural areas of Oregon where it will not endanger high-value seed crops with the risk of genetically engineered cross-contamination, and pest and disease spread. For many years, protections for high-value seed crops have ensured stability and profitability for Oregon seed growers, and access to the profitable global market for our seed sellers. Rolling them back is bad for business, and creates an unpredictable, unstable environment for seed growing. Driving seed farmers out of business for a low-value crop creates economic instability and loss for no compelling reason.

SB789 is a wise extension of the current policy, enshrining the current protections and collaborative system in state law.