

Testimony in Support of SB 789

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Girod, Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Nellie McAdams, the 3rd generation on my family farm in Gaston, Oregon. I am testifying today in strong support of SB 789, which would prevent the sunset of a 30-year-old program designed to protect the Willamette Valley's valuable and unique brassica seed industry. The original legislation should have sunset back to the pre-legislative condition, but in an error not noticed at the time, will remove the protections altogether when it sunsets.

The Willamette Valley specialty seed industry brings in over \$15M per year and provides \$9.2M in direct and indirect labor income. Countries around the world rely upon the Willamette Valley to produce the majority of the world's brassica seed, including over 90% of cabbage seed, because most other regions with appropriate conditions for brassica seed production have been destroyed by cross-pollination from uncontrolled canola production.

Canola is a low-value rotational crop that cross-pollinates with brassica seeds, rendering them useless. It can be replaced in rotations by other crops like camelina that don't easily cross-pollinate. **The OSU report** that found the biology, seed persistence, and disease susceptibility of *individual canola plants* to be similar to other brassicas **did not take into account the economic realities of commercially growing canola vs. other brassica seeds.** Field management practices are different for a low value oil crop like canola that can tolerate a lot of loss to black leg and pests and still be harvestable - unlike seed crops. And canola growers have no incentive to weed rogue canola plants in the field and along roadways like seed producers need to do in order to prevent cross breeding.

I urge the committee to consider what is at stake.

Ten years ago I heard powerful testimony from Takashi Ishizaki of Tohoku Seed Company Ltd. in Utsunomiya, Japan, who flew to Oregon to testify on behalf of our seed protection zone. His \$100M/year company had been producing vegetable seed in the Willamette Valley for 30 years and 70% of their sales depended upon seeds grown in the Willamette Valley. Mr. Ishizaki stated:

If something is not done to provide long term protection from canola, then my company and other companies will need to immediately start looking for other places to produce our seed...We do not look forward to this prospect as we have very few good areas worldwide... We expect if canola production is allowed, it will just be a matter of time before we have ... the same problems we have seen elsewhere in the world such as Europe, Australia and the [sic] southern California.
(HB 2427, 3/19/2013)

Similarly, Dan Hillburn, Administrator of the ODA Plant Division in 2012, told Oregon Live:

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'[O]ne of the most interesting days in [his] career' was a 2009 telephone conference with experts who'd wrestled with the vegetable-canola conflict in France, England, Denmark and Japan. Each clearly believed the Willamette Valley's soil, water, climate and ability to isolate fields made it one of the best places in the world to grow seeds. But canola?

"They all said, in so many words: I don't know what the answer is, but don't blow it." (["For Oregon farmers, oil-rich canola is either promise or peril"](#)) Oregon Live, Feb.18, 2012 by Eric Mortenson)

The committee has an important decision before it, but it should not be a difficult decision. Senate Bill 789 simply continues a controlled growing and pinning program that has been in place for 30 years, and is successfully used in Washington State for the same purpose. For the sake of the world's seed production, I urge the Committee to allow this sensible and tailored program to continue, and to vote yes on SB 789.

Thank you
Nellie McAdams