



March 8, 2023

Senate Committee on Natural Resources  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon

Re: Opposition to SB 789 – Permanent restrictions on Canola

Chair Golden and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 789. The undersigned represent farmers, ranchers, and foresters from around the state who want to see a thriving agricultural and natural resources sector rooted in science-based policy, innovation, and stewardship.

Representatives from our organizations have contributed to legislative and regulatory discussions around canola restrictions for more than two decades. While we are sympathetic to the specialty seed industry and the concerns being raised about cross-pollination and seed purity, there is no justification for the continued and permanent restriction of a legal and viable crop like canola, particularly given the variety of best management practices that could be implemented as an alternative to permanent restrictions.

Canola is certainly not the only crop to pose an issue to neighboring crops, nor are cross-pollination issues the only issues that must be negotiated between neighbors. Far from it. Throughout our organizations' long histories, we have been engaged in a number of formal and informal workgroups to help find solutions to this and similar issues, with an end goal of coexistence across a wide diversity of crops and production practices. With over 240 commodities produced in Oregon in a variety of ways, attaining coexistence is a never-ending process, but one that must be prioritized by our policy makers in order for Oregon's diverse agricultural sector to remain strong and viable.

Several years ago, the Oregon legislature called for and received (from Oregon State University) an extensive review of potential negative impacts to specialty seed crops from canola. That review found "no reasons, agronomic or biological, that canola production should be prohibited in the Willamette Valley when there are no restrictions on the production of other Brassicaceae crops."<sup>1</sup> And while the Oregon Department of Agriculture has the authority to restrict crops based on imminent threat of pest, weed, or disease issues that might require area-wide control,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/Administration/HB2427ReportCanola.pdf>

the Agency does not have the authority to restrict certain crops to prioritize the specific marketing concerns of others. Nor should that be justification for legislative restrictions on a legal crop.

There are a number of best management practices that could be implemented to resolve concerns between specialty seed and canola growers. These include field buffer separations, the use of pinning maps or other systems of communication between neighbors, effective weed control, management of planting dates and flowering times to minimize cross-pollination issues, sanitation of equipment, and attention during product transport. These practices should be the primary focus of any effort to resolve the ongoing concerns, which we note that to date have not resulted in any actual negative impacts. Our organizations are committed to supporting formal and informal coexistence workgroups, as we always have been.

Canola provides an important rotational crop for many growers. It improves soil structure and health by increasing water infiltration. With a high yield potential and low water needs, canola can be a successful new crop for many growers adapting to a changing climate. And with processors in the Pacific Northwest, there are local markets for canola, which significantly reduces transportation costs.

Whether it is the size of our farms, the production practices we choose, or the type of crop we choose to grow, the legislature should not be in the business of deciding, based on subjective opinions rather than science, which crops or types of production should receive preferential treatment over others. A permanent cap on canola in the Willamette Valley lacks scientific or agronomic basis, and unnecessarily prevents access to an important rotational crop that would provide Oregon growers with new and expanded opportunities. Please vote no on this bill, support coexistence, and allow growers and other stakeholders to develop effective, science-based solutions to address concerns or issues if they arise.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 789.

Oregonians for Food & Shelter  
Oregon Wheat Growers League  
Oregon Cattlemen's Association  
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association