



May 11, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon

Re: Opposition to SB 789 – Permanent restrictions on Canola

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 789. The undersigned represent a significant proportion of Oregon's agricultural and broader natural resources sector. Our collective goals include a thriving agricultural and natural resources sector rooted in science-based policy, innovation, and stewardship.

Our organizations continue to oppose a permanent cap on canola of 500 acres within the Willamette Valley Protected District. We are aware that there are amendments posted on this bill, and we would be willing to discuss support for those, or have additional discussions toward an actual compromise that is rooted in science, evidence, and data and enables a gradual increase of canola acres with attention to negative impacts to the specialty seed industry.

Regarding the base bill, we would like to highlight three important points:

- 1) The production of canola has been a contentious issue in Oregon for decades, which has led to almost 20 years of significant local research on the topic. Notably, ten years ago, in 2013, the legislature passed HB 2427 which provided funding for *additional* research through Oregon State University to formally assess the potential for coexistence between canola and other Brassicaceae seed crops in the Willamette Valley. The results of that **state-funded, internationally peer reviewed** research (along with results of other research conducted from 2006-2010) clearly support coexistence and a measured expansion of canola acreage in the Willamette Valley. The 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> We encourage any policy maker seeking to make a decision on this issue to read this peer-reviewed science.
- 2) The status quo of allowing only 500 acres of canola was established in 2013 not based on any scientific reasoning, or recorded incidents at higher levels, but because that was

---

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

the *minimum* number of acres required to conduct the research. Thus, 500 is a completely arbitrary number with regard to what is a reasonable or appropriate number of acres that can coexist with other specialty seed crops without incident.

- 3) There is already precedent for coexistence within Willamette Valley Seed Production. Several other Brassicaceae crops currently grown the Willamette Valley pose the same challenges related to pollination and seed purity, and pest, disease, and weed volunteer issues. This includes turnip, radish, and forage rape grown for cover crop seed. Mustards, kales, turnips, and radishes must also be isolated from each other to avoid cross-pollination and protect seed purity. Additionally, and although GM canola is unlikely to be a variety of choice for PNW growers due to markets and other factors, genetically modified (GM) sugarbeet, chard, and table beet seed have all been produced within the Willamette Valley within the same season, using pinning systems and science-based isolation distances to ensure seed purity. If canola fields were treated **like other existing crops which are not restricted**, and included in a pinning system to maintain needed isolation distances from sexually compatible crops, cross-pollination would be avoided.

In addition to being a productive and economically viable crop on its own, canola is 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 pressure from outside groups rather than science, which crops or types of production should receive preferential treatment over others, and certainly not which crops should be excluded from production altogether to protect the markets of another. 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 issues if they arise.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 789, we urge you to follow the science and oppose this bill.

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