



February 13, 2024

Representative Ken Helm
Chair, House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water Committee
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 4059

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Hartman and Owens, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 4059. After the passage of SB 789 in 2023, the Oregon Organic Coalition (OOC) participated in multiple workgroup meetings during the summer and this winter. OOC participated in the workgroup meetings in good faith, looking for an equitable solution for all growers in the valley.

Oregon's Willamette Valley Protected District (WVPD) is special. It is a unique location for producing premium vegetable seeds, and because of this, Oregon is a global leader in seed production, with an estimated economic output of \$25 million per year. I have been engaged in this issue for over a decade and appreciate the legislature wanting a permanent solution.

While OOC believes the -7 amendment is moving in the right direction, it is still missing components to protect seed production long-term, especially since the -7 proposes unlimited canola in the WVPD, which is more acres of canola than has been previously discussed.

Seed lot testing

While 6-mile isolation and an acreage cap for GE are a good start, these must be accompanied by seed lot testing requirements. As we have shared many times, the harm from GE material only goes one way, and once GE canola is in the WVPD, it is there to stay.

OOC has repeatedly cited scientific studies in Canada that found that 33% of conventional seedlots tested by Friesen et al. (2003), and 18% of the seedlots tested by Downey and Beckie (2002), had the Roundup Ready transgene present at levels above 0.25%.

Downey, R.K. and H. Beckie. 2002. Isolation effectiveness in canola pedigreed seed production. Internal Research Report, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Saskatoon Research Centre, Saskatoon, SK, S7N 0X2, Canada. 14 pp.

*Friesen, L.F., A.G. Nelson, and R.C. Van Acker. 2003. Evidence of contamination of pedigreed canola (*Brassica napus*) seedlots in western Canada with genetically engineered herbicide resistance traits. *Agron. J.* 95:1342-1347.*

These were published in the following report:

Van Acker, R. C., Brûlé-Babel, A. L., Friesen, L. F., & Entz, M. H. (2003). GM–non-GM crops coexistence in western Canada: Can it work?. In *Manitoba Agronomists Conference. Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba*. http://www.umanitoba.ca/afs/agronomists_conf/2003/pdf/vanacker_GM_nonGM_crops.pdf. Accessed: May (Vol. 23, No. 2007, pp. 189-196).

The standards for purity in Canola in Canada was 99.75%, which is the reason for the 0.25% threshold. Until Oregon has a clear picture of the rate of “adventitious presence” in non-GE canola seed lots, it is an unacceptable risk that can have significant negative impacts on organic and conventional seed production, as well as non-GE canola production.

[Here is one](#) example from 2019 of supposedly non-GE canola turning out to be contaminated with GE canola in Europe—farmers had to rip out thousands of acres of canola. The contaminated seed was produced in a GMO-free area and it was unclear how the contamination happened.

Seed stakeholders have consistently highlighted concerns like this for over a decade, because of the easy nature in which canola can cross contaminate. Roadside weed pressure further exacerbates these and other risks too.

Dr. Jim Myers, who participated in the Work Group, has made himself available for scientific consult on this issue. Dr. Myers holds the Baggett-Frazier Endowed Chair of Vegetable Breeding in the Department of Horticulture at OSU. He has more than 25 years of experience in breeding Brassica vegetable crops.

Priority for Seed Growers

We strongly support pinning priority for specialty seed growers when parties are unable to come to an exception agreement. Willamette Valley seed production leads to millions of pounds of food consumed across the globe and it is important that Oregon safeguards the ability to grow seed for food.

Emergency Brake

The -7 amendment is missing an emergency brake mechanism if increased canola acreage begins to negatively impact brassica seed production. This is critical to give the agency the necessary tools to pause canola production when pest and disease pressures become too much for the valley to handle.

Thank you for considering these critical adjustments to HB 4059 -7.



Amy Wong
Board Chair, Oregon Organic Coalition