



Employee and Grower Owned • Promoting Health through Organic Agriculture as a Leading Sustainable Organization

May 22, 2017

To: Chair Williamson and members of the Committee
ATTN: Chair Williamson
Re: Hearing on House Bill 2739

Dear Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee,

We urge you to support HB 2739, legislation to allow farmers who experience the drift of genetically engineered material on their land to seek damages from the patent-holders of those crops. To date, the State of Oregon has failed to protect farmers from unwanted contamination from genetically engineered crops, which leaves farmers vulnerable to economic damages and infringes on their rights to farm with traditional seeds, so we believe that the Legislature should strengthen the ability of farmers to hold GE crop patent-holders financially liable for the damage to farmers from unwanted presence of their products.

Unwanted transgenetic contamination is a *very real* issue for Oregon farmers, for both those who are certified organic and those who grow non-GE conventional crops. The burden is particularly impactful for those who utilize organic practices, considering the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) standards strictly prohibit organic operations from using genetically engineered organisms, and for those who have a vested interest in exports, as many nations in the world have banned the sale of genetically engineered crops. Oregon is unique in that we are one of the foremost regions in the world for growing vegetable seed and we are a strong exporter of agricultural products (e.g. wheat & alfalfa). Oregon has over 409 certified organic farms, operating on more than 175,000 acres and Oregon is 4th in the nation in organic farmgate sales, valued at \$269 million. Consumers in many markets increasingly have concern over GMO contamination, and will reject products if there is a threat of contamination, and many buyers are now instituting mandatory testing before buying products. Farmers wishing to grow traditional, GE-free crops bear the unfair burden of needing to implement extraordinary measures to try to prevent contamination of their land, crops, and seed stock from the risk of cross-pollination and cross-contamination from GE crops and then holding financial liability when there is cross-contamination. GE patent holders reap the benefits of the sales of their patented seed and hold none of the risk, while non-GE farmers suffer significant financial loss in the case of cross-contamination.

The passage of HB 2739 would protect farmers in Oregon by allowing them to hold GE crop patent-holders financially responsible when unwanted presence of GE material drifts onto neighboring crops and causes harm.

I wish these comments to be submitted as testimony for public hearing.

Stacy Ann Kraker
Director Communications and Marketing
Organically Grown Company

Employee and grower-owned, Organically Grown Company (OGC) was founded nearly 40 years ago and today is the largest distributor of organic fruits and vegetables in the Pacific Northwest. Currently, OGC works with more than 300 grower/vendors and serves over 500 retail, wholesale and restaurant customers located throughout the Greater Pacific Northwest and beyond. Our Mission is “Promoting health through organic agriculture as a leading sustainable organization.” www.organicgrown.com