



# Oregon Farmers on Balanced, Reasonable Protections for Brassica Seed Production

## **SB789: Protecting Oregon's Vibrant Seed Industry**


The Willamette Valley is one of the last regions on earth suitable for large-scale brassica seed production. Willamette farmers grow 90% of the world's supply of many brassica seed varieties in a \$24M per year industry, supplying growers around the world. Regions with similar growing conditions in Europe and Australia have been made unusable for seed production because canola has been grown at large scales. SB789 maintains the status quo for the Willamette Valley Protected District - keeping in place an acreage limitation and pinning system that have been used for 30 years to ensure that canola does not contaminate seed fields, increase pest spread, and decimate the seed industry. Failure to pass SB789 would end the 30-year protections and allow unlimited canola growing. This would irreparably damage, or destroy, a high-value industry without justification.

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As a third generation family farmer in the Willamette Valley, my family and I work hard - for our business and for the community. A big reason we farm the way we do is because we count on our high-value specialty seeds being protected from contamination from a low-value oilseed crop, rapeseed/canola. Canola can contaminate neighboring brassica seed fields, bringing in new pests and the possibility of genetic contamination to our valuable cabbage and mustard seed crops. The Willamette Valley Protected District has helped farmers cooperate to protect seed crops, and ensure that rapeseed/canola is grown in places where it will not contaminate neighboring fields. Unfortunately, a small group of farmers have been pushing to end this long-standing collaborative system. We can and should move past this divisive conflict and back into a collaborative system where canola is grown where it makes sense, and speciality seed farmers and producers can keep building this unique, and tremendously valuable, part of the farm economy.

**Garth Mulkey**

**GS3 Quality Seed (grass, cover crop, and vegetable seeds)**



Like the incentives to build cars in Detroit or grow oranges in Florida, protecting key industries is a cornerstone of smart economic policy. In the Willamette, that means protecting land for high-value vegetable seed growing, and for the many crops that don't interfere with high-value seed growing, like grapes, grasses, and other oilseeds. Dismantling a collaborative system that works for everyone, in the interest of a powerful few, just doesn't make sense.

**Kenny Smith**  
**President, Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association**

It's important to keep in mind that the majority of these specialty seeds are the foundation of our food. They are the source of vegetables that feed us and keep us healthy. By destroying the Willamette Valley as a Brassica seed production region, we are putting our own, and the world's, food supply at risk. Canola can be grown pretty much anywhere. Specialty brassica seed cannot.

**Sarah Kleeger**  
**Owner, Adaptive Seeds**

A common justification for the introduction of canola to Willamette is the need for broadleaf rotation options for wheat and grass seed growers, something to break pest and disease cycles. There are a lot of options in this regard that wouldn't threaten the specialty seed industry with disease, pest, and contamination issues. Clover, vetch, sweetclover for example. These create value by fixing nitrogen that benefits subsequent cash crops.

**Frank Morton**  
**Wild Garden Seed**