

The evidence of recent years is too overwhelming to doubt that drift from genetically engineered, or GE crops, has contaminated nearby—in some cases, NOT so nearby non-GE crops—in countless instances. And with worldwide demand constantly growing for products free of genetic engineering, until we take action the loss to US farmers will continue to run into the billions of dollars in rejected sales, lost exports and closed agricultural markets.

Right now we have a situation where an industrial farmer is free to operate in ways known to imperil his neighbor's crops. When that in fact results in a big economic hit, the contaminator bears no legal or financial liability for that damage. And in case that's not astonishing enough, there are the lawsuits we've seen by major GE corporations against farmers whose fields they've contaminated for "Unlicensed use" of their GE products. In my spare time, Mr. Chair, I like to write fiction, but I'd never dare try to sell a plot line like that.

But it's real, and you have to wonder why. Is there a public policy purpose, that anyone that anyone can offer with a straight face, for holding GE contaminators free of liability? Or does it have more to do with the outsized influence of global firms like Syngenta, Bayer and Monsanto in our legislatures? Whatever your views in that, I hope that we can agree that it's massively unfair for non-GE farmers to suffer these wholly predictable economic damages with no recourse in the law. It's time to change that.

**Let me offer one thought about the -2 amendments** to this important bill. The intent is well captured in Section 2, which authorizes ODA to make rules on GMO crops. Section 3, however, seems to have ambiguous language that's unnecessary for granting this authority. I would suggest that we let ODA promulgate rules to minimize GE contamination before taking other steps in statute that could lead to confusion

In the interests of time I will spare you long colorful stories about our struggle to ban GE crops in Jackson County, which voters did by a 2-1 margin in 2014, mostly because of the contamination issue this bill addresses. Becoming a GMO-free zone has given family-scale agriculture a big boost in the Rogue Valley. Our neighbors in Josephine County also passed a GMO ban by a margin of nearly 3 to 2, but that was overruled by state legislation that banned counties other than mine from regulating GE products. I see that pre-emption as an extreme violation of a community's legitimate rights, and I think this is another place you can see the hand of the world's largest agrochemical corporations.

But that's not the legislation we're discussing today. If the state is going to continue to deny counties the right to protect themselves from GE contamination, the *least* we can do is enact HB 2882 to protect individual farmers from demonstrable, sometimes lethal economic harm when their particular crop is predictably contaminated.