



SB 1037 and HB 2739 are alive and well!!

Thanks to all who took the time to email and call into Salem. Your efforts paid off!

SB 1037, the GE local control bill, was scheduled for a **Hearing and possible Work Session on Wednesday, April 12th at 3pm. Please join us at the hearing and show your support! Your presence and voice truly makes an impact.** If you are able to come to the hearing, please rsvp to Elise Higley by [email](#) or call 541-200-9972.

[SB 1037](#) would restore counties' rights to protect local farmers' crops from harmful effects of genetically engineered crops. These rights were stripped in the 2013 special session with the passage of SB 863 in the Grand Bargain, which created a statewide preemption without corresponding protections for farmers.

Passage of the bill will provide a legislative fix for Josephine County and protect the GE crop ban passed in 2014 and the will of the people in that county. **When that is in place, together Josephine and Jackson County can protect their farmers and this unique seed growing region with more than 3300 square miles of a GE Free Seed Sanctuary!**

Please show up in support of the 9th GE FREE ZONE in the US and let these representatives know that you care about the traditional seed supply in Oregon by [contacting the Environment and Natural Resources Senate Committee members.](#)

[HB 2739](#), the bill that holds GE patent holders (i.e. Monsanto and friends) liable for their damages, is scheduled for a **Work Session on April 18th**. The meeting will be public, but no public comments will be taken at the work session. Until then, please pass on the message to your friends and family to ask their legislators to support this bill. If you haven't had a chance to take action yet, please do so now by [contacting judiciary committee members](#).

For the latest news from Salem, check our [Website](#) and [Facebook page](#)!

Seed Sanctuary Celebration



Saturday, May 20th, 2017
Caldera Tap House
31 Water St.
Downtown Ashland



Come by between 3:30 and 5:30
for Cake and Light Appetizers
Raise a glass and Toast our Victory!

May 20th has been a significant date in our organization's history

May 20, 2014 - Election day when we learned that voters had passed ballot measures that would protect family farmers from the threat of contamination from genetically engineered crops.

May 20, 2015 - We defended Jackson County's new ordinance in Federal court - and won!

May 20, 2016 - We gathered for our 1st Annual Seed Sanctuary Celebration!

www.ourfamilyfarms.org

Buy SEED: the Untold Story on DVD

Celebrate seeds with 10% off the award-winning *SEED: The Untold Story*!

Use code **OFFSEED** at seedthemovie.com and **30% of proceeds will be donated to Our Family Farms!**

In the last century, 94% of our seed varieties have disappeared. As biotech chemical companies control the majority of our seeds, farmers, scientists, lawyers, and indigenous seed keepers fight a David and Goliath battle to defend the future of our food. In a harrowing and heartening story, these reluctant heroes rekindle a lost connection to our most treasured resource and revive a culture connected to seeds.



SEED comes from the filmmakers behind *Queen of the Sun: What Are the Bees Telling Us?* It features Dr. Jane Goodall, Vandana Shiva, Winona LaDuke, and Andrew Kimbrell.

Input Needed From Rogue Valley Farmers

Jackson County farmers are invited to participate in a seed purchasing and production survey conducted by Our Family Farms and the Southern Oregon Seed Growers Association. The 5-minute survey is part of a larger USDA grant-funded market research project evaluating the potential to increase the production and sales of seeds grown in Jackson County.

Farmer input is crucial for this project in order to support the financial and production needs of the region's farm businesses. The implementation of this project will connect area growers to new wholesale and retail buyers.

[Take the survey online.](#)

For more information about this project, or if you would prefer to fill out a paper version, please email [Wendy Siporen](mailto:Wendy.Siporen).

Southern Oregon boasts an excellent climate for growing vegetable and flower seeds. The hot summers and relatively low precipitation during the fall allow seed crops enough time and heat to fully ripen and dry down. During the past decade, the number of small-scale, specialty crop seed growers in the region has greatly expanded. The passage of a ban on genetically engineered crops in 2014 means that seed farmers and their customers can have more assurance that their crops remain genetically true. The research will evaluate the potential to expand production and sales, share seed processing equipment, educate consumers, and train new seed farmers.

Welcome to All Our Newest Business Members!

Thanks to Growing Peace and Coconut Bliss for becoming an Our Family Farms [business supporter](#)!

Growing Peace



Over the past 25 years I have taught workshops in Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills to individuals and groups seeking to improve their relationships and work together more effectively. Whether you want to be a better parent, farm manager, or community activist, these essential skills will support you in whatever you do.

Refine your ability to talk with people holding differing perspectives. Move from flight/fight reactivity to “flow”. The next series, Communication Skills for Challenging Times, begins April 24th. I hope you will join us! Full details can be found at my website.

Coconut Bliss

Coconut Bliss is *The Evolution of Ice Cream!* We create divinely creamy dairy free frozen desserts.

We started with joy and passion, freezing creamy coconut milk into its most divine form. We added pure and simple ingredients to create an abundance of flavors that are certified organic, dairy-free, gluten-free and soy-free. Whether you're vegan, gluten-free, paleo, or just want a delicious frozen dessert, you've found it!



See all of our business members in our [Online Directory!](#)

Consolidations in Agricultural Biotech Companies

By Dr. Ramon Seidler, Ph.d.

There was a time in America, in the 1800s, during which the federal government distributed seed packets to help facilitate the rapid expansion of the continent and offer food security to the population. In the early part of the 20th century, the first wave of seed hybrids spurred on the earliest seed company profits; this happened because hybrid seeds required farmers to return to the seed distributor to purchase new seeds each year.

After WW II, regional seed companies sprung up offering greater varieties of newly improved hybrid seeds that promised even better growth and better yields. In the 1960s, the first signs of seed company consolidations began. **However, consolidation exploded in 1980, after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that patents could be based upon genetic modifications.** Companies that had no history of interests in seeds, including a few large chemical and pharmaceutical firms (Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Bayer, and Dow), began purchasing seed companies, resulting in billions of dollars in mergers and acquisitions.⁽¹⁾ Corporate America realized the tremendous genetic diversity hidden in those regional seed companies and was anxious to profit from it, using the brand new patentable genetic technologies.

Following initial consolidations and the exploitation of patented genetically engineered seeds, there has been a 52% spike in seed costs in corn from 2012 to 2015, and earlier on, prices for both soy and corn had increased more than 300% since 1995—the year patented genetically modified cotton seeds first hit the market.[\(2\)](#)

So it's not surprising that many farmers are wondering today about the consequences of further consolidation in the agriculture industry. What might all this mean economically for smaller family farms and the remaining private seed companies? **Here is a brief compilation of the buzz, what's known and what is not known about the answers.**

Why consolidate? Of course the answer is economics, logistics, and strategic, depending upon who the partners are. Most of the big 6 corporations have lagging sales, lagging profits, and lagging stock prices in the last 5 and more years. So for differing reasons, the big 6 look like they will soon become the "bigger" big three. (Monsanto/Bayer, Dow/Dupont, and Chem China/Syngenta) with plans to fix these "lagging" concerns.

Based upon best estimates, if consolidations were all approved, the "big 3" companies would share about 82% of the corn market and 76% of the soybean market.[\(3\)](#) This compares to the 2007 big three that cornered 65% of the corn and over half of the soy markets.[\(4\)](#)

Some consumer advocates fear, "a new era of sterile crops soaked in dangerous pesticides."[\(5\)](#) There is also a feeling of impending deterioration in food security, especially in developing countries due to a decline in access to seeds and an increase in costs. On the other hand, the buyout of Syngenta by Chem-China is thought to be one mechanism for China to increase future food security for its people.

With these consolidations, some farmers feel trapped and fear insufficient product choices for their businesses and a loss of competitively priced goods and services. Some farmers now face one seed company, one tractor dealer, one fertilizer company, with concerns over fewer choices of materials, fewer seed varieties, and finance plans. Some farmers fear that things will become worse after consolidation.

Some Optimism: Consolidation may help smaller seed companies and, therefore, benefit local Jackson County seed farmers.

There is cautious optimism among many smaller, independent seed producers that consolidation will work for their benefit. Some independent seed producers believe that consolidation will open up the seed market and that some farmers will leave the big corporate appeals for more expensive genetically engineered seeds.

"Plenty of customers will ditch the big-name brands because they want more personalized service and products developed for local soils and climates," says Sonny Beck, the 75-year-old head of *Beck's Hybrids*, the largest independent seed retailer in the country.⁽⁶⁾ Myron Stine of *Stine Seeds* agrees with this assessment. All independent seed companies account for about 20% of the total corn seed sales in the U.S.

Independent seed companies often have unique "pieces" of genetic diversity in their stocks that are precisely suitable to local and regional soil and climatic conditions. Such genetic seed stocks are actively sought out by the big biotechnology corporations. Local seed dealers therefore can benefit substantially through contractual license arrangements with biotechnology companies to provide such genetic diversity.

So the biotechnology companies will take these unique genetic stocks, genetically engineer herbicide resistance into the seeds, patent it and a new GE seed is "born."

Some financial investors feel that smaller companies may also have a financial edge over GE seed prices. Because of this, "traditional breeding may actually be on the rise." "Farmers are less interested in speculating on high-cost, potential yield boosters. They want cost-effective solutions."⁽⁶⁾ **We will see what happens.**

For Further Reading about the status of consolidations, See [China Moves a Step Forward in Its Quest for Food Security](#) and [Trump could approve a giant merger that's scaring American farmers.](#)

Dr. Ramon Seidler is a former professor of microbiology and retired senior research scientist with the US EPA GMO Biosafety program.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Growing Pollinator Gardens

Wednesday, April 12th from 7:00-8:30 pm at Ashland's Bellview Grange

Who are our pollinators? Why are they important? What challenges are they facing? What can we do to reverse their population declines?

Join Kristina Lefever of *Pollinator Project Rogue Valley, Bee City USA Ashland*, and a *Jackson County Master Gardener* to learn more about creating a pollinator friendly habitat in your backyard.

Seed Sanctuary Celebration

Saturday, May 20th at Caldera Tap House in Downtown Ashland

Come by between 3:30 and 5:30 for cake and light appetizers and raise a glass to toast our Victory and Celebrate our 3rd year as a GE FREE Seed Sanctuary!



We hope you will support [Our Family Farms](#) as we work to create thriving communities by promoting and protecting family farms and traditional seeds from the threats of genetically engineered (GE) crops.