



Let your voice be heard!

The clock is ticking and time is running out this legislative session, your voice needs to be heard.

Do you know where your elected representative stands on protecting our seed supply and family farmers against the threats of GMO contamination? Our elected officials need to know you care about these issues if we are going to pass the Liability Bill and help Josephine County officially become a part of the Rogue Valley GMO free seed sanctuary.

If you are interested in joining Our Family Farms for a meeting with your representative either in district or in the Capitol Building in Salem, Oregon please email us so we can arrange a meeting.

Stay up to date on all the latest news on our Website and Facebook page!

Join us This Saturday to Celebrate our 3rd Birthday!

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.

Got Seed? Want Seed?

Input needed from Rogue Valley Farmers Who Buy Seed

Jackson County farmers who buy or sell seed 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 identify the seed needs of area farmers and connect area seed 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.

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.

Our Family Farms Member Raffle

Congratulations to our Raffle Winner Bruce Schlieder! He won 5 yards of compost blend from Soil Salvation in Ashland. **Thank you Soil Salvation for your donation and for becoming a business member!**



See all of our businesses supporters in our Business Member Directory!

Not a member yet?

We can't do our work without you!! As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Our Family Farms depends on the generosity of businesses, organizations, and caring individuals, like you, to continue our work to support collaboration, legislation and education to create GE-free agricultural zones in the United States and around the world.

You can help support our mission to promote and protect family farms and traditional seeds by:

- Becoming an Annual Individual member

- Giving monthly as a Sustaining Individual member
- Being a Business or Organization Supporter
- Giving a Donation

NEWS

Help Keep Organic Farms Organic

We are asking for your emails or phone calls by May 22. Perhaps you have heard that Sherman County, Oregon, recently changed the interpretation of its statutory code from controlling noxious weeds to eradicating them. This change could have drastic repercussions for Azure Farm, a 2,000 acre certified organic farm in Sherman County which grows and supplies organic wheat, field peas, barley, Einkorn grain, and beef to thousands of Azure Standard customers, many of them here in the Rogue Valley.

The code change was implemented following complaints filed by neighboring farmers about weeds growing on and spreading from Azure's land. The noxious weeds in question are Canada Thistle, Skeleton Weed, WhiteTop, and Morning Glory/Bindweed.

On May 22, Sherman County plans to issue a Court Order to quarantine Azure Farms and spray the whole farm with Milestone and Escort herbicides and Round Up, which would not only cause Azure Farm to lose its organic certification, it would contaminate the soil, water, and air on the farm and for miles around. Azure Farm would also be required to pay for the labor and chemicals.

As an advocate for thriving communities and resilient, local, food systems, this controversy and proposed action is very concerning for Our Family Farms. We can certainly understand the position of

neighboring farms - drift, whether it be pollen from genetically engineered crops, weed seeds, or pesticide spray - is a valid concern for any farmer. We are all part of a larger community and what we do on our property does impact our neighbors. We encourage Azure Farm to take immediate and certain steps to reduce as much as possible the movement of weeds onto other farm land.

We have sent a letter to the County urging them to consider actions other than spraying toxic chemicals as the way to deal with weeds on this very valuable piece of farmland. As organic farmers, we know that weeds are a constant battle but that they provide benefits by way of soil improvement and water retention. On the other hand, synthetic pesticides would create major long-lasting problems for the land, as well as the human and non-human inhabitants of Sherman County for years to come. For more on this topic, we recommend reading this excellent letter by Dr. Charles Benbrook of [Hygeia Analytics](#).

Please help us reach out to the County about this issue before May 22. Please take a moment to send an email or make a phone call to Lauren Hernandez with the Sherman County Court at lfernandez@co.sherman.or.us or 541-565-3416.

Court Holds Bee-killing Pesticide Approvals Violated the Law EPA must analyze risks to endangered species



[A Federal Court has ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) systematically violated the Endangered Species Act \(ESA\) – a key wildlife protection law – when it approved bee-killing insecticides known as](#)

neonicotinoids. In a case ongoing for the last four years, brought by beekeepers, wildlife conservation groups, and food safety and consumer advocates, Judge Maxine Chesney of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California held that EPA had unlawfully issued 59 pesticide registrations between 2007 and 2012 for a wide variety of agricultural, landscaping and ornamental uses.

"This is a vital victory," said George Kimbrell, Center for Food Safety legal director. "Science shows these toxic pesticides harm bees, endangered species and the broader environment. More than fifty years ago, Rachel Carson warned us to avoid such toxic chemicals, and the court's ruling may bring us one step closer to preventing another Silent Spring."

Seeds coated with bee-killing neonicotinoid insecticides are now used on more than 150 million acres of U.S. corn, soybeans, cotton and other crops – totaling an area bigger than the state of California and Florida combined – the largest use of any insecticides in the country by far. Additional proceedings have been ordered to determine the correct remedy for EPA's legal violations, which may lead to cancelling the 59 pesticide products and registrations, including many seed coating insecticides approved for scores of different crop uses.

The court's ruling went against other claims in the lawsuit based on the plaintiffs' 2012 petition and their procedural argument that EPA had not published several required Federal Register Notices. The beekeepers and others plaintiffs were relying on a petition filed in March of 2012, at which time the scientific evidence of the harm to bees, other critical species and the broader environment was far less developed. The original petition however is still lodged with EPA, and as such, its resolution is not yet fully decided.

"Vast amounts of scientific literature show the hazards these chemicals pose are far worse than we knew five years ago – and it was bad even then," said CFS attorney Peter Jenkins. "The nation's beekeepers continue to suffer unacceptable mortality of 40 percent annually and higher. Water contamination by these insecticides is virtually out of control. Wild pollinators and wetland-dependent birds are in danger. EPA must act to protect bees and the environment."

The case is [Ellis v. Housenger](#). The plaintiffs in the case are beekeepers Steve Ellis, Tom Theobald, Jim Doan, and Bill Rhodes; Center for Food Safety (CFS); Beyond Pesticides; Sierra Club; and Center for Environmental Health. They are represented by CFS's legal team.

Originally Published May 9, 2017 by [Center for Food Safety](#)

Pollinator News

By Kristina Lefever

Many of our readers are familiar with Oregon Tilth, if only because their logo is on so many foods on store shelves. In addition to being a certifier of organic foods, Oregon Tilth (OT) also provides training and assistance to farms, businesses, and more.



In Good Tilth is OT's monthly magazine, available in hardcopy form and also online. The [May issue](#) is chock-full of articles and information about pollinators and other beneficial insects. Although directed

towards farmers and growers, this information will be of interest to anyone who is concerned about pollinator and/or human health. Articles such as:

- [A New Certification from the Xerces Society and Oregon Tilth Aims to Restore Pollinator Habitat](#)
- [Farming with an Army of Natural, Hungry Enemies to Control Crop Pests](#)

"Pollinators are key to our own health and well-being," said Sardiñas. By "farming for pollinators," growers can help create more sustainable farm systems, and consumers can make conscious choices to support companies that take pollinator conservation seriously."

UPCOMING EVENTS

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!

Wandering Fields

Thursday, May 25th from 6 to 8 pm

A Southern Oregon Seed Growers Association event open to everyone! Ben Yohai will show his biennial seed crops and discuss the challenges and benefits. Ben has been growing seeds for a decade and contracts with multiple seed companies. For details and directions, RSVP to Paula by [email](#) or call 541-776-7371. Include first

and last name of each person, a contact phone number and an email address.



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.
