



ABOUT THE OREGON SEED COUNCIL

Our mission is to engage in issues of importance to the Oregon seed industry, enriching collaboration within its membership and all related parties.

The Oregon Seed Council is an integral part of Oregon's past, present, and future. Created in the 1960's, the Oregon Seed Council is a trade organization that advocates for seed farmers, seed marketers, brokers, researchers and others involved in the Oregon seed industry. Bringing industry together, we serve as a leading voice for industry, and elevate the importance and quality of Oregon grown seed within the public, media, and the government, and focus on issues that impact the seed industry from when the seed is planted to when it makes it to the hands of the consumer.

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

Grass seed was the number three commodity in the state of Oregon in 2022. Annually, the Oregon grass seed industry drives more than \$1 billion in economic activity, providing over 10,000 jobs to Oregonians.

In addition to being an economic driver for our local communities, the seed industry provides many critical environmental benefits. It's regenerative, has major, positive impacts on soil health, water quality, and erosion control, and importantly, is a great tool for carbon sequestration and cooling.

FEDERAL POLICY

IR-4 PROJECT

The IR-4 Project has played a critical role for Oregon's grass seed industry for decades by providing required data needed to develop and obtain pesticide registrations and labels.

Since GGS is a minor crop, registrants of pesticides often cannot/will not pursue registrations and labels for GGS because our crop does not meet their economic model to warrant their efforts and resources.

Registrants can go through IR-4 to obtain registration of crop protection products for minor crops. The IR-4 route to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with the data waives the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA) fees that would otherwise be paid by the registrant. This route to regulatory approval does fit the registrant's economic model for product development on minor crops.

Without the IR-4 Project, Oregon's grass seed industry would be left without nearly all the crop protection products that are available to our growers and needed for optimum crop production.



REQUEST #1: Designation of Grasses Grown for Seed (GGS) in the list of authorized list of minor crops the IR-4 Project is charged to work on and provide support for.

Issue

In April, we were notified by the IR-4 Project that the EPA would not consider GGS as a minor crop and would not allow the IR-4 Project request for tolerance on an active ingredient that has been progressing through the regulatory process. For context, the process takes approximately four years from initial approval of the request from the growers to the EPA's approval and establishment of tolerance on grass.

Essentially, the EPA has decided to not recognize GGS as a minor crop because our crop is over the acreage limit. The limit is defined as being less than 300,000 acres.

This causes a significant dilemma for Oregon's grass seed industry:

1. We currently have five priority projects working through the process in the IR-4 Project. These projects, which have already consumed substantial investment to bring them to fruition and utilization by our growers, may not be accessible to our growers if the EPA does not allow them to proceed through the IR-4 Project to the EPA.
2. If GGS is not able to utilize the IR-4 Project to assist growers and registrants in obtaining regulatory approval, then our growers will be losing access to critical resources, new active ingredients, or new use patterns of new and established crop protection products. Without the ability for the industry to utilize the IR-4 Project, farming Oregon grass seed will become more challenging, in an already highly regulated environment.

REQUEST #2: \$25 million investment in the IR-4 Project to maintain services.

The specialty crop community is asking Congress to increase financial support for the IR-4 Project in Fiscal Year 2025 from \$15.0 million to the Congressionally authorized \$25 million. Funding for the IR-4 Project is authorized by the Farm Bill 2018 and included in U.S. Department of Agriculture appropriations in the National Institute of Food and Agriculture Research and Education Section as line-item Minor Crop Pest Management (IR4).

The need for IR-4 Project services continues to increase while federal funding has increased modestly to \$15.0 million. Current funding limits the IR-4 Project's ability to meet the crop protection needs of farmers and food processors while affecting the ability of the specialty crop food chain to provide quality products. The IR-4 Project has had to reduce new research efforts with residue studies by over 20% over the past five years. In addition, over the past decade, the IR-4 has closed two labs which supported the analysis efforts and good laboratory practices required in submission of registration documents.



FARM BILL

The Oregon Seed Council is asking for the following to be incorporated in the Federal Farm Bill to support our industry in providing jobs, resources, and sustainability for our economy:

Incentives for cover crop use in the corn and soybean growing area of the Midwest. Annual ryegrass, a productive crop in the state of Oregon, is a great resource used to slow erosion, improve soil health of soil, support water availability and help mitigate weeds, pests, and disease. Inclusion of annual ryegrass in the list of cover crops eligible for the incentive offers a benefit to overall environmental, soil, and water health. We also ask the committee to consider allowing for this cover crop to be used for feed/forage in times of disasters.

Crop insurance accessibility for growers in Oregon. Current rules on crop insurance favor grass seed growers in Minnesota, providing a competitive advantage over Oregon producers. The Oregon Seed Council requests your support in making this vital support available to Oregon growers, especially those with multiple crops, creating an equitable opportunity for growers.

Increase and make specialty crop grants accessible. The Oregon Seed Council is grateful for the continued investment in specialty crop grants and requests support to make the process for recipients to be more streamlined and less administratively burdensome.

Tri-state (Oregon, Washington, and Idaho) grants for grass seed production research. This grant program provided around \$1.5 million to the Northwest annually for research projects. Land grant universities – such as Oregon State University and the United States Department of Agriculture Forage Seed and Cereal Research Unit in Corvallis, Ore., provide innovative research and resources to our growers helping them be nimble, adaptive, and promote sustainable agricultural practices while boosting our economy. These grants were removed from the farm bill several years back and renewal of this program would help boost our state and nation in delivering exceptional products.