

Canola comment period extended

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By Mitch Lies, Oct. 19, 2012

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has extended the comment period on its proposal to expand allowable canola production acreage in the Willamette Valley.

The comment period, which originally closed Oct. 5, has been extended to Nov. 2.

The department is also forming a new canola advisory committee.

"We are looking for input from an advisory group that has expressed interest in looking at the proposed rule, and changes that might improve the rule," said Bruce Pokarney, communications director for the department. "(The committee) is designed to include representation from those who support some canola production and those who don't."

The ODA in August proposed expanding where canola can be grown in the valley by 1.7 million acres. The canola-production zone, as it would be called, would surround a nearly 2-million acre protected zone, where canola would continue to be banned.

The department in 2005 restricted where canola could be grown in the valley to protect specialty seed crops and fresh vegetables from an increase in pest and disease pressure that some producers say is inevitable with widespread canola production. The department tightened restrictions in 2009 when it all but eliminated canola production in the valley.

Canola backers said the proposed rule represents a reasonable compromise that will allow some canola production in the valley, yet protect Oregon's high-value specialty seed industry from an increase in pest and disease pressure.

A hearing Sept. 28 brought out widespread opposition to the proposal.

If the department significantly alters the proposed rule, it will hold an additional public hearing and extend the comment period a second time, Pokarney said.

To comment

Parties can comment on the Oregon Department of Agriculture's proposed canola rule by emailing: canola-rulemaking@oda.state.or.us, or by mailing comments to: Canola Hearings Officer; ODA; 635 Capitol St. N.E.; Salem, OR 97301.