

My name is Arlo Skari.

My wife and I are partners with our son in a fairly large barley and wheat operation north of Chester in Liberty County. I am aware of seed development companies playing hard ball with farmers who found grain growing in their field from patented seed having blown over on their land; then having to defend their farm enterprise from lawsuits filed by the company owning the patented grain.

I am very aware of seed companies (Monsanto, Syngenta) lobbying for the approval of genetically modified grains as I am currently serving as a director on the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee. This testimony, however, is entirely of my own volition.

The problem with GM grain is that our largest customers (Asian countries) do not want GM grains and these countries represent about 80% of our market. That is why Montana has not approved this grain as of yet as losing that market would be a disaster not only for the farmer but for the state economy.

If a farmer unknowingly possesses GM grain from contamination from another source and it is discovered, he or she could well lose the farm if an established mandatory crop sampling protocol by patent holders is not in place. The farm could be subject to legal action by both the patent holder and the state Agriculture Department. This bill is long overdue, and welcome, but addresses only part of the problem.

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