

Ill. ruling puts some at risk

More vigorous state criminal prosecution of safety and health violations in the workplace is in prospect.

An Illinois Supreme Court decision on Feb. 2 exposes corporate officials to increased risk of imprisonment and/or monetary fines for such violations.

The American Seed Trade Association, 1030 15th St., N. W. Washington, D. C., 20005, has copies of the ruling report prepared by ASTA legal counsel.

Weed stance toughened after Argentine problem

The Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has toughened its stand on noxious weeds found in imported seeds.

The agency announced on Feb. 7 that:

"Any weed or imported weed seed listed in the Federal Noxious Weed Act Regulations is subject to the FNWA even if occurs in a shipment of agricultural or vegetable seed."

Prompting this decision was

discovery of Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) in lots of grass seed mixtures containing tall fescue imported from Argentina.

Previously, only those nine noxious weeds listed in Title III of the Federal Seed Act were cause for concern in imported seeds.

The Federal Noxious Weed Act Regulations list many more seeds.

Oregon

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Agronomy Unit have all said that without burning it would be difficult to maintain the seed industry as it exists today.

John Powell of Powell & Associates in Salem, who lobbies for the Oregon Seed Trade Association, said, "It's an extremely emotional issue." Some 500 people — "a majority of them from the farming community" — attended a public hearing on one bill on April 11, he said.

Powell said he has been negotiating with the governor's office, legislators and opponents of burning since late October and he expects a compromise to be worked out. "The fact is, the hearings usually don't change any minds," he said.

Jim Carnes, president of International Seeds and immediate past president of the American Seed Trade Association, said, "I do not feel there will be a ban at this time."

"The governor (Neil Goldschmidt) has said he will veto a ban. He wants action taken but the seed industry to survive."

Carnes said the seed industry has offered these compromises:

- Reducing the cap on burnable acres statewide from 250,000 to 165,000.

- A five-year phaseout of burning, but allowing growers to continue to burn stacks if they can't sell the straw. "We've proved less than 10 percent of the smoke is generated from stack-burning because it's a much hotter fire," he said.

- Increasing fees that growers pay per acre that they burn, with the money used for research on straw use and alternative ways to sanitize fields.

- The five-year phaseout be law "providing we have workable alternatives in place, certified by the Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Environmental Council."

Powell said an immediate ban would surely not pass.

"If it did, it would shut down the industry as we know it because no known way exists to even give the straw away," he said.

He said the prospects of negotiating a limited burning are good.

"There are two major questions," he said. "One, how many acres will be allowed to be open-burned? Two — and this really worries the farmers — will there be a definite cutoff date in the future?"

Open-field burning has been an issue in Oregon for nearly 20 years.

The state legislature in 1971 banned open-field burning effective in 1975; but the 1975 legislature set a four-year phaseout. Then the 1979 legislature stopped the phaseout at 250,000 acres statewide.

Since then the seed growers have portioned out the 250,000 acres among their total 345,000 acres.

The legislative battle is "going to be difficult," said the Oregon Fine Fescue Commission's Nelson.

"We just have to work through the process... Our opponents want to bring the issue up on the 1990 legislative ballot."

But the seed growers just released a poll that indicates that 65 percent of the Oregonians polled oppose a ban on field burning.

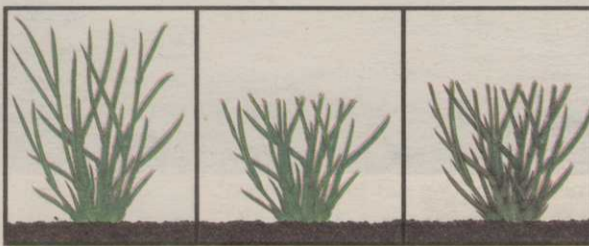
Another 31 percent supports the ban and 4 percent are undecided, the poll found.

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