



Washington Association of Wheat Growers

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Wheat growers turn out in strong opposition to proposed pesticide bills

Pesticides are an important and necessary part of any growers' toolbox, and while the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) understands the public concern over unintended drift events, we believe that thanks to technological advancements in nozzle spray technology and chemical formulations, the vast majority of pesticide applications are done safely, with no adverse effects to the public.

As is par for the course in recent years, several pesticide bills have been introduced in the 2018 Washington State Legislative Session. In a Senate Committee hearing last week, WAWG and other groups representing Washington agriculture joined together to oppose SB6529, which would require unreasonable reporting and notification periods prior to pesticide applications.

"Farmers are mindful stewards of the land, air and water, and we take careful precautions in how and when we spray any pesticides on our fields. Farmers must be licensed and must participate in regular training in order to handle and apply chemicals. We already observe strict notification and reporting rules, and we adhere to application standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency," said Marci Green, president of WAWG and a farmer from Fairfield, Wash.

Because pesticide applications can only be done under certain weather conditions, including temperature, humidity, wind speed and wind direction, regulations that require advance notification periods before a spray application are extremely burdensome and could result in crop devastation due to a grower's inability to address a pest or weed problem in a timely manner.

"When we discover a problem in one of our fields, time is of the essence in applying crop protection products. I would hate to be required to let one or two 'good spray days' pass us by and then have wind and rain on the day I'm scheduled to spray," Green said.

Nicole Berg, chairman of WAWG's Natural Resource committee and a farmer from Paterson, Wash., calls today's farmers "precision agricultural specialists" who only apply nutrients and pesticides when needed and in the smallest dose possible.

"Sometimes the public doesn't understand the amounts we are dealing with. Last year, we applied four ounces of pesticide per 100 gallons of water to treat a problem called stripe rust, a disease that if not treated promptly can quickly devastate whole fields," she said. "We aren't dumping chemicals into the air or soaking our fields in pesticides. We use very small amounts and precisely apply them to keep ourselves, our families, our workers and the public safe. These bills are unnecessary and redundant."

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About WAWG: Education and outreach are the heart of Washington Association of Wheat Growers activity, all of which is aimed at helping Washington wheat families. Since 1954, WAWG has been dedicated to the enrichment of the Washington wheat industry as a nonprofit trade association, which depends on volunteers, membership dues and donations to carry out activities as representatives on the state and national levels. WAWG monitors state, transportation, research and natural resources policy and partners with the National Association of Wheat Growers to monitor national farm policy. Visit wawg.org for more information.