

# Oregon Specialty Seed

## AT A GLANCE

### Specialty Seed Benefits

Economic, Social, Environmental

Commercial-scale vegetable seed production began in the Pacific Northwest as early as the 1880s. World War II and the North Atlantic blockade raised the importance of these crops, as the United States's supply of imported seed was cut off and production in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands was disrupted.

World seed production of cool-season crop species is clustered within a few degrees of the 45th parallel. Oregon's latitude, long hours of summer sunlight, dry summers, mild winters, fertile soils, and water for irrigation make it ideal for vegetable and flower seed production. Until recent times, relative geographic isolation might have been added to that list of attractions. Sufficient isolation of seed crops is crucial, as many of the genera grown here will cross pollinate, and resulting seed cannot be true to type. Isolation districts, pinning maps, seed certification, seed cleaning, and testing facilities are infrastructure supporting the regional seed industry today.

Seed production can be a difficult business to enter because, although these crops have high value, they also have high risk. Seed companies are an integral partner in crop production. Successful specialty seed production requires a different production strategy than one used to grow the same crop for vegetables or flowers. World demand for organic seed currently outstrips production and may be a lucrative niche market for some seed growers.





# Oregon Specialty Seed

Cooperative research and educational outreach have benefited the vegetable and flower seed industry in these ways:

- Reduced nitrogen fertilizer for carrot seed by 40% and water application by 50% while increasing yields and reducing threats to groundwater quality. \$ 🌱 🤝
- Continually researches and provides a resource guide for organic seed production, an emerging global market. \$
- Reduced pesticide applications from a routine to an as-needed basis, by carefully monitoring conditions that coincide with pest outbreaks. Saves growers money and encourages biodiversity by reducing unnecessary pesticide use. \$ 🌱 🤝
- Continually works with bee keepers to maintain healthy, high-quality hives that can provide sufficient pollination for a successful seed crop. \$ 🌱
- Promoted strategy to recycle drip irrigation tape rather than dispose of it in a landfill. \$ 🌱 🤝

## Benefits key

- \$ Economic benefit
- 🌱 Environmental benefit
- 🤝 Social benefit



Produced by the Department of Horticulture and Extension Service, Oregon State University.

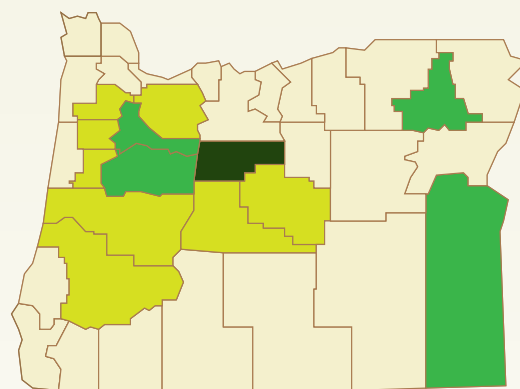
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## Oregon Specialty Seed

Family farms	320
Acres harvested	21,100
Tons produced	21,213
Value of sales	\$38.7 million
Share of U.S. domestic carrot seed production	85%
Share of U.S. domestic cool-season vegetable seed production	90%
Share of world cool-season vegetable seed production	50%

## Notes

Data in this section are based on conservative estimates from industry experts.



## Farm Receipts

- \$10.8 million
- \$1.5–4.5 million
- <\$1.0 million