About 500 species of bees – like this sweat bee – live in Oregon, and just like honey bees they need appropriate flowers for pollen and nectar. Photo by Andony Melathopoulos. Photo courtesy Oregon State University.

'It kills everything, it kills bird and bees, it harms children and farm workers'

by NBC 16
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LANE COUNTY, Ore. - Two bills restricting certain pesticides will get hearings tomorrow in the Oregon legislature.

Marie Bowers is a fifth generation farmer at Bashaw Land and Seed in Harrisburg.

Things changed for her family farm in 2010 when field burning was banned in the Willamette Valley.

Now pesticides are a tool she uses to keep the bugs at bay.

"We would lose a good chunk of our yield, about 50 percent of our yield to bugs and weeds if we didn't have a mechanism to control them," said Bowers.

Now she's concerned about two proposed bills, SB 853 and HB 3058, that would ban a type of pesticides called chlorpyrifos.

Lisa Arkin is director of Beyond Toxics, one of the supporters of the bill.

She says studies have shown that this particular type of pesticide can be extremely harmful.

"It kills everything, it kills bird and bees, it harms children and farm workers," said Arkin.

Another aspect of the bill restricts the use of noenicitinoids - a chemical that can currently be found in common garden and pest products.

It would require certification to use the pesticide so the average person can't go spray it in their garden.
But Bowers doesn’t agree. She says for large farms, chlorpyrifos is the most efficient and cost-effective option. And to use it you have to be certified annually and there’s regulation on when and where types of chemical can be used to reduce the impact to pollinators.

"If we didn't have to use chemical we wouldn't use chemicals but sometimes that your only option,” she said.

At a hearing on the bills in Salem, both women will be ready to defend their take on the issue.

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