

Date of Hearing: March 25, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
Esmeralda Soria, Chair
AB 1848 (Ransom) – As Introduced February 11, 2026

SUBJECT: California Seed Law: annual registration fee

SUMMARY: This bill would authorize the Secretary of the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), after consulting with the Seed Advisory Board (board), to increase the seed seller registration fee from \$40 to \$100. The bill would authorize the secretary, on and after January 1, 2028, to, after consulting with the board, annually increase the fee by up to \$50, but not to exceed \$300 total, for each fiscal year or portion of a fiscal year beginning July 1.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) California Seed Law (CSL) regulates seed sold in California and requires every labeler of agricultural or vegetable seed offered for sale in this state or any persons who sell seed in this state, as provided, to annually register with CDFA to obtain authorization to sell the seed, except as provided. (*Food and Agriculture Code (FAC) 52281-52289*)
- 2) Requires each application for annual registration to be accompanied by a payment of a \$40 fee for each fiscal year or portion of a fiscal year beginning on July 1. (*FAC 52352*)
- 3) The moneys collected pursuant to the seed law, including registration fees, assessments, and penalty revenues, are continuously appropriated to the CDFA to carry out its provisions. (*FAC 52321*)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: The goal of seed law enforcement is to protect seed consumers, including vegetable and field crop growers, as well as urban landscapers. Through the CSL, the Seed Services program within CDFA does the following:

- 1) Regulates the marketing of seeds so that quality information is accessible and accurate.
- 2) Tests for seed purity and germination through sampling.
- 3) Investigates seed complaints and attempts to resolve buyer/seller disputes through mediation.
- 4) Works to prevent the transmission of noxious weed seeds through seed products.
- 5) Supports research and development of seed biotechnology.

Poor quality seeds can cost farmers and home gardeners considerable amounts of time, money, and resources, by way of reduced yields, poor crop quality, contamination by weeds or other unwanted species. By enforcing CSL regarding marketing and labeling, CDFA can ensure that consumers receive the desired product, and that there is supportive legal action for those who are wronged.

California seed manufacturers have paid annual fees to CDFA. Since 1973, that fee has been \$40 per fiscal year. In the intervening 50+ years, costs have grown significantly, and seed manufacturers have consolidated, leading to fewer manufacturers paying a less meaningful fee.

The result of these two factors means that CSL and the programs it requires have received less funding, reducing the self-reliance of the program. This bill will remedy this issue by raising these fees and is supported by the seed companies who pay those fees.

This bill has significant potential to support small-scale farmers and agriculture by supporting programs ensuring the quality of the seeds they rely on. CDFA's existing programs ensure the quality of seeds, accuracy of purported germination rates, as well as the varietal of seeds purchased. Increasing available funding to these programs and the commissioners who inspect seeds will limit cost burdens on small farms and the communities that rely on them.

According to the author, this bill supports the work of CDFA in inspecting seed products, testing germination and purity, and preventing mislabeled or contaminated seeds from entering the market. CSL requires seed companies to register with CDFA and pay a fee to cover costs associated with the inspection and monitoring program. The fee, which has not been increased since its establishment in 1973, is no longer adequate and must be adjusted to sustain this important program. The seed monitoring and inspection programs funded by these fees protect farmers from costly crop failures, promote fair competition among seed sellers, and maintain the reliability of California's agricultural supply chain. California's agriculture is a cornerstone of the international food marketplace, and protecting our breadbasket is essential. This bill helps CDFA continue to fund their monitoring and protection programs to keep our agricultural sector healthy for years to come.

Supporters state this bill would help provide the resources needed to administer and enforce California's seed law. The current annual registration fee was established in 1973 and has not been increased since. \$40. The bill provides a one time increase to \$100, would allow the Secretary, after consulting with the Seed Advisory Board, to increase that fee annually to a maximum not to exceed \$300. This measured, tiered approach provides a reasonable path for future adjustments while preserving oversight and industry input.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Seed Association (Sponsor)

Opposition

None on file

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