



For Immediate Release

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Latest California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Outreach Program Pits Farmers against Urban Residents in Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) Controversy

CDFA claim that LBAM can thrive in the Central Valley is contradicted by study posted on the CDFA's website. Citizens' groups call on Governor to rein in Secretary of Agriculture.

Sacramento – The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has begun an aggressive outreach campaign to encourage Central Valley cities to pass resolutions that support the spraying of an untested pesticide over densely populated coastal counties in an effort to eradicate the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM).

Frustrated by a growing number of resolutions opposing the spray program by cities, counties, school districts, labor unions, environmental groups, and others in the spray zone, CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura is reaching out to the Central Valley's agricultural communities to seek their support for the pesticide spray program. Dr. Robert Leavitt, Branch Chief of the CDFA's Integrated Pest Control confirmed this strategy at a May 27 San Bruno City Council meeting. "It turns out that certain Central Valley cities - Assistant Secretary Pegos has been instrumental in this - are starting to pass resolutions and you will find them passing resolutions in the near future supporting the Department's efforts and asking the Department to continue. I believe you'll also find that certain or actually many of the farm bureau type organizations are starting to support and are supporting this program."

The Secretary's first foray into the Central Valley took place on May 14 in Reedley. In an hour-long presentation to farmers and members of city government, CDFA argued that the presence of the LBAM in the Central Valley would result in crop damage and costly quarantines that would keep Reedley produce from leaving the county. The research of many academics contradicting CDFA's claims about the risk of LBAM, including evidence that LBAM will not reproduce in the Central Valley's temperature extremes, was not presented.

Residents of the spray zone who have organized to oppose the LBAM program are deeply concerned about the effects of such a strategy on relations between urban and rural communities and have called on Governor Schwarzenegger to instruct the Secretary to end his campaign. Reedley native and Pacific Grove resident Mike DeLay whose wife was sickened by last summer's spray in Monterey County, traveled to Reedley to hear the presentation. DeLay said, "The CDFA is completely distorting the threat of the LBAM and misrepresenting the health effects to people exposed to the pesticide. A study posted on the CDFA website (*Mini Risk Assessment Light Brown Apple Moth*, Venette, et al) states that the moth

and its larvae cannot survive in the temperatures common to the Central Valley.” DeLay went on to say that a Madera county farmer at the Reedley event pointed that out to the Secretary and asked him “why he was stirring up fear among Central Valley farmers.”

Berkeley resident Jane Kelly also attended the Reedley meeting and notes, “The CDFA tries to write off the 600+ health complaints made by residents of Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties after last year’s spray.” The State’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), the Department of Pesticide Regulation, and the Department of Public Health released an assessment of the claims that concluded that they didn’t have enough data to determine a causal link between the pesticide and the health complaints. “The CDFA uses the report to say there is no link,” said Kelly. “In diplomatic language that would be called a ‘misrepresentation’.”

A letter sent today to the Governor from Stop the Spray – East Bay points out that pitting farmers and rural communities against their urban customers over a program that has been rebuffed by two courts, and whose necessity and efficacy have been questioned by scientists, is not in the best interests of the State nor its residents.

“The moth has been in California long enough to have demonstrated its threat to California agriculture. To date it has caused no damage to crops and is being kept in check by native predators and targeted, ground-based integrated pest management methods,” said Paul Schramski, Executive Director of Pesticide Watch. “Asking farming communities to overlook the actual impacts of the LBAM, and support this ill-conceived, unnecessary, and potentially harmful spray program is regrettable. We are hopeful that the Governor will agree with us and order the Secretary to focus his attention on more pressing problems facing agriculture and the farming community.”

Opponents of the spray program are now meeting with Central Valley farmers to listen to their concerns and enlist their support for a healthier and precautionary approach to the presence of the LBAM.

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Pesticide Watch is a statewide public health and environmental group that works side-by-side with communities to clean up pesticide pollution and prevent pesticide exposure.

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