

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

FAX: 916-558-3160

June 4, 2008

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger,

We are writing to alert you to a counterproductive new tactic being used by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) in an ill-advised quest to promote a spraying program against the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM): CDFA has begun an outreach campaign that will pit farming communities against urban residents. We have grave concerns about the CDFA's latest strategy of enlisting the support of farming communities in the Central Valley for its spraying program in highly populated urban counties. Ultimately, we believe this approach will divide the state and promote profound distrust in government.

We are founding members of Stop the Spray - East Bay, a citizens' coalition to stop the CDFA's planned pesticide spraying program. We oppose the spray program because we have serious questions about its necessity, safety, and its likelihood of success. Those concerns are shared by many and are why 30 cities and counties in the spray zone and 81 groups and organizations including school districts (see attached list) have listened to the evidence provided by both the CDFA and local groups opposed to the spray, and have voted to oppose the spray program. Not a single city in the spray zone that looked at the evidence provided by the CDFA now supports the spray program. In addition, two jurisdictions have successfully sued the CDFA and others are preparing to sue to stop the program. Please understand that the opposition to the state's current plan is growing rapidly and will continue to do so until the program is abandoned.

While the number of those opposed to the spray continues to grow, CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura has pressed on, frequently misrepresenting the threat of the LBAM, overstating its impacts on agriculture, and dismissing as "misinformed" the research of respected academics and others who are seeking to find a better solution. Even two adverse court rulings that halted further spraying in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties until the CDFA complied with the California Environmental Quality Act's requirement to complete an Environmental Impact Report have not dissuaded the Secretary from continuing to seek support for the spray program. Now he is turning to the farming community to rally their support for this misguided effort without providing full disclosure of the facts and uncertainties that surround the program.

For example, on May 14, 2008, the CDFA held an LBAM Forum in Reedley. During the Q&A, an organic farmer from Madera said he had received a call from the Governor's office asking him to support the spray program. At first inclined to support it, he decided to do more research on the issue before making a commitment. His research led him to conclude that the moth cannot thrive in the Central Valley because local temperatures are too high for the moth to reproduce. He further stated that he checked with several local UC entomologists who confirmed his research. He concluded by asking Secretary Kawamura why he was in Reedley "stirring up fear" among farmers in the Central Valley.

During the CDFA presentation in Reedley, John Connell, Director of the CDFA Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services, stated that the LBAM has been in California for 1-2 years, yet Secretary Kawamura acknowledged 4 days earlier on a radio program that the CDFA now believes that the LBAM has been here for 6-7 years. The Secretary did not correct Mr. Connell's statement even though the justification for the spray program relies heavily on the assertion that the moth has just recently arrived in California.

At the Reedley presentation, the Secretary touted the safety of the pesticide being used by pointing out that the state Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) concluded that there was “no link” between the pesticide spraying in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties and the more than 600 reports of ill health effects. Similarly, at a May 27 CDFA presentation to the San Bruno City Council, CDFA’s Dr. Robert Leavitt stated that OEHHA had concluded that “there was no connection between the reported illnesses in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties and the Light Brown Apple Moth sprays.” These representations of the report’s conclusion are not only misleading, but are incorrect. The OEHHA report states that “[i]t is not possible to determine whether or not there is a link between any of the reported symptoms and the aerial spraying” and “[m]ore than 90 percent of the 643 symptom reports do not contain adequate information for us to determine whether or not there is a link between the reported symptoms and the Checkmate applications.” In fact, OEHHA officials confirmed at a press conference that they only analyzed 10 percent of the 643 health reports.

These are just a few examples of how the CDFA is misinforming the public, and they raise questions about the credibility and honesty of the CDFA and the other state agencies that have been tasked to support the CDFA in this campaign.

We ask that you immediately instruct the CDFA to cease its misrepresentation of the facts and end this strategy that will eventually pit Californians against Californians. Caution the Secretary that creating a rift between agricultural interests and their customers is not in anyone’s interest.


We also ask that you immediately halt all further plans to conduct an aerial or ground spraying program for LBAM and that you instruct Secretary Kawamura to first involve independent scientists to ascertain whether a response to LBAM is, in fact, warranted, and, if so, to develop a response that truly protects human health and the environment.

Governor Schwarzenegger, your environmental efforts on behalf of the State and country on climate change have been remarkable. By placing your signature on AB32 (Global Warming Solutions Act) you set the state and the country on a path to address the most serious threat to the planet that humans have ever faced. In doing so, you gave concerned California citizens a needed inspiration to redouble our efforts to take on this and other daunting environmental challenges.

It is our hope that the vision of the future that inspired you to put climate change at the top of the state’s agenda will also allow you to see that the state’s current approach to addressing the presence of the Light Brown Apple Moth represents a reliance on the past’s failed policies and antiquated practices.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

On behalf of STOP THE SPRAY EAST BAY (eastbayinfo@stopthespray.org),



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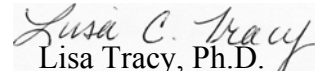
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