

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Secretary Kawamura's recent editorial concerning the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) aerial pesticide spray relies on blatant misrepresentations of the truth, fear-mongering and outright lies. The spray program he defends imperils California's families, children, pets, and environment, based on no real science and no solid facts.

The real facts are simple. CDFA sprayed Monterey and Santa Cruz counties, and at least 643 people got sick. They reported their illnesses although the State made no infrastructure available. The State only accepted health complaints signed by a physician, but physicians were not trained to assess the toxic exposure associated with the spray. Anyone without insurance or access to a physician could not "officially" report health problems. Secretary Kawamura's assertion that there were no adverse reactions to the spray is an outrageous bureaucratic determination, not a true health assessment.

And that is only the beginning of the Secretary's swift boating. He has the audacity to imply wide support for the spraying from environmental organizations. In fact, the Sierra Club is on record, along with 25 other health and environmental groups, opposing the aerial spraying.

Make no mistake about it, the chemical used last year, Checkmate, is a pesticide despite Secretary Kawamura's white-washing talk of harmless pheromones. The facts: Checkmate is made up of three components that have either not been tested or are known to be dangerous:

- 1) the synthetic moth pheromone: not tested for long-term human exposure risk. The State's own health Consensus Document includes a disclaimer that it is based on studies that assume the pesticide will be sprayed over unpopulated agricultural areas.
- 2) the so-called inert ingredients (not inert meaning inactive; "inert" only means they do not target the pest): carcinogens, mutagens, reproductive effectors, liver toxins, skin irritants, and unsafe to inhale.
- 3) The microscopic plastic capsules in which the pesticide is sprayed, which time-release over 30 days: Inhalation risk is unknown, but U.C. Davis scientists found some particles are small enough to be inhaled into the deep lung where they cannot be expelled. It doesn't take a scientist to know that can't be good.

Secretary Kawamura focuses only on the LBAM aerial spraying, ignoring the program's other toxic and questionable practices, including requiring wholesale nurseries to use the organophosphate pesticide chlorpyrifos, employing state personnel to install traps and use pesticides in private yards that are toxic, especially to cats, honeybees, and the beneficial predators that naturally keep pests in the environment – including LBAM -- in check.

Secretary Kawamura's fear-mongering comment that, if left unchecked, LBAM will destroy every green plant in the state and possibly the country is contradicted by facts: Even CDFA says there has been no crop damage attributable to LBAM in California.

Professional biologists testify that LBAM is a minor pest in New Zealand where it is also an introduced exotic species. New Zealand's biggest LBAM problems are from a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) quarantine, not from actual damage. In addition, entomologists agree that LBAM has likely been in California for 10 years, so if there was going to be crop damage, wouldn't we have seen it by now?

So now we come to the Big Lie about the "pest that was never a pest." Decades ago, LBAM made it onto a USDA list of supposedly voracious invasive species. To date, I have been unable to find this original designation. The main goal was, I believe, to protect powerful U.S. agriculture interests from competition from crops from New Zealand and similar areas. As a result, today we have the "Light Brown Apple Moth Emergency."

Secretary Kawamura expresses concern that other states and countries might ban California produce because of LBAM – even though those countries' quarantine restrictions were adopted to mimic the U.S.'s. Note that Europe does not quarantine for LBAM.

So the plot sickens. It's all about money. Big money. Rather than admit that LBAM is not the threat that's been claimed and request that LBAM's USDA classification be revised based on up-to-date science, Secretary Kawamura is willing to poison us and our environment. And to spend \$500,000 on a public relations firm to help "sell" this charade to us.

I am ashamed of Secretary Kawamura's disgraceful public deception campaign to sell a hopeless, dangerous and likely unneeded "eradication" program to the people. He should immediately call an end to the plans to give us time to make rational decisions based on sustainable, Integrated Pest Management principles. Short of calling off the spray and undertaking sound pest management, he should resign.

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