

California State Senate Food and Agriculture Committee Hearing; Don't Spray California Statement

Sacramento, August 25, 2009

My name is Helen Kozoriz of Stop the Spray Alameda County. I am here to read a statement prepared by Don't Spray California who are unable to attend today's hearing.

"Don't Spray California represents a group of people living in the LBAM quarantine zone, most of whom are disabled by pesticide poisoning. The continuation of CDFA's LBAM Eradication Program is a direct, personal threat to the health and lives of our communities.

Over the last decade of exposing many such government pesticide programs, we have found that false "emergencies" like the LBAM program are manufactured to secure funding for the agencies involved.

USDA recently launched an expensive advertising campaign to convince us that foreign insects will invade if we don't let them apply pesticides. This campaign represents the interests of the pesticide industry, to which Invasive Species Councils have well-established links.

Eradication programs are being justified with trap finds which trigger quarantines and forced pesticide applications. However, increased numbers of insect finds do not reflect that numbers of traps are also increased. Furthermore, consistent finds in massive trapping programs is statistically expected in any naturalized population of insects.

Trap finds do not justify eradication programs. Trap finds determine the presence of an insect, not whether it is doing damage, likely to do future damage, or whether the local ecology is keeping it in balance.

There is no evidence that LBAM has done any damage. In fact, CDFA continues to receive funding to develop a reliable identification method.

Independent scientists have determined that the LBAM program is not based on sound science. Hundreds of people have reported illness from exposure to pesticides used in the LBAM program. The environmental devastation was obvious to all who witnessed bird and bee deaths, including the worst red tide in decades immediately following aerial applications on the Central Coast.

Overwhelming sociopolitical opposition alone should have ended the LBAM program according to USDA's own emergency programs manual. Instead we are forced to pay with our health and taxes for CDFA and USDA's chemical dependence.

CDFA and USDA's reliance on mono-cropping increases vulnerability to pests because such fields lack a biodiverse, self-managing ecosystem. Organic growers rarely worry about pests, but they are targeted and harassed by CDFA and USDA "eradication teams". They are forced to bear the brunt of the burden of quarantines, with the associated requirement to apply pesticides and destroy their crops, or lose their farms and livelihoods of all who work there.

Many of the insects we are told to fear have natural cycles where their populations ebb and flow. Eradication and control programs interfere with these cycles and with nature's ability to adapt to change.

Nature does not operate according to industry's fiscal cycles. Moreover, the industry's unwillingness to share some of the abundance of the harvest with the ecosystem at large is unrealistic. The insistence that everything grown in a field must go to market is a policy that causes more damage to the environment than any insect ever could."

Thank you.

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