Farmers, Workers and Advocates Host Healthy Harvest Conference

Sacramento, CA — On March 20th, 2010, sustainable farmers, Good Food advocates and farm workers will participate in the annual conference co-hosted by Pesticide Watch Education Fund and Californians for Pesticide Reform entitled “Healthy Harvest: From Field to Table”. For about a decade, the conference has served as an opportunity to bring together community activists from across the state to attend workshops, listen to inspiring speakers, and to share experiences and strategies. Conference partners include Asian Resources, Hmong Women’s Heritage Association, Pesticide-Free Sacramento, Slow Food Sacramento, and Soil Born Farms.

With residents becoming more aware of both the dangers of pesticide use and the challenges facing the food system, this is a critical moment in time. Conference organizers are seizing on the opportunity to rebuild communities and fix the broken food system.

Register for “Healthy Harvest” today at www.pesticidewatch.org/conference

A Note to Our Members

Earlier this year, we launched The California Food Project with community organizations across the state, to more proactively solve pesticide problems and connect people with their food. As we have piloted this program across Northern California, we have learned that despite recent gains by the Good Food Movement, communities still face incredible barriers to healthy food access, and remain critically disconnected from farms and ranches. Producing and sourcing healthy, organic food is a tremendous transition for our industrial food supply.

The broken food system can seem too large, unwieldy and complex for many people to understand. But we have found that when people work to legal- ize backyard chicken keeping, create new local government purchasing policies, or linking farms more directly to schools, we make a huge difference in the lives of farmers, workers, children and their parents.

In 2010, we aim to continue to tackle the problems of asthma and obesity head on. In this new year, we pledge to continue growing our efforts to support local farming, in urban and rural landscapes, and create healthier communities.

Sincerely,

Paul Schramski Towers
State Director

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Address Service Requested

Sacramento, CA — On December 14th, approximately 100 people from all parts of California converged in Sacramento’s Cesar Chavez Park to kick off a rally and march to the state capitol demanding that Governor Schwarzenegger and California legislators have signed a letter to the DPR urging them to not register the fumigant pesticide methyl iodide for use in the state of California.

Methyl iodide, has raised concerns from scientists across the country, including five Nobel Laureates, who were “astonished” that a chemical posing such high risks to human health would be consid- ered for use in agriculture. “It is difficult to over-state how hazardous this chemical is, and how inappropriate it is for agricul- tural uses,” states Dr. Susan Kegley, chem- ist and consulting scientist for Pesticide Action Network.

Applied as gases, fumigant pesticides fre- quently drift away from their targets, poi- son communities and cause long-term health problems especially in farm workers who work most closely with the chemicals. Methyl iodide, which is commonly used by scientists to induce cancer cells in laborato- ries, would be applied in agricultural fields at rates up to 175 pounds per acre.

The march ended on the steps of the state capitol with Assemblymember Bill Monning, representing the Monterey and Santa Cruz Bay Areas, prominent strawberry growing regions, addressed the crowd, “Methyl iodide has no role to play in build- ing a secure, viable and healthy agricultural economy in the 21st century. The time is now to listen to the science and protect our communities.”

For the past several months, Pesticide Watch Education Fund has worked with community organizations like the Moss Landing Heights neighbors to demon- strate grassroots opposition to the chemi- cal. Thousands of people have written letters, made phone calls and visited their legislators. In addition, over thirty-three California legislators have signed a letter in opposition to the chemical.

In the next few weeks, state regulators at DPR will make the final decision about whether or not to approve the chemical for use. We intend to work with commu- nity organizations along the Central Coast and Central Valley to stop the chemical from being registered and tackle existing and new fumigant pesticides as they are proposed, as well as the entire regulatory system that permits their use.

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Farm Workers & Communities Fight New Strawberry Pesticide

Governor to stop the registration of methyl iodide

Register for our annual conference today!
Backyard Chicken Movement Takes Flight

Sacramento, CA — Abi and Dave Crouch live in an urban Sacramento neighborhood, and lead a relatively normal life; but they have a secret. While it is illegal under City of Sacramento law, and punishable by a fine, they have a small flock of backyard chickens. The Crouches have joined a growing movement of people that have recommitted to raising their own food. “Backyard hens and their eggs are nutritious, fun and put us on the path to greater food security,” said Abi Crouch. Over the past year, Abi, Dave and many others have organized an effort called the Campaign to Legalize Urban Chicken Keeping (CLUCK), with the help of Pesticide Watch Education Fund’s California Food Project. The group has worked tirelessly to host educational film screenings, table in front of local stores and farmers markets, meet with city councilmembers, and educate city staff. As a result, the City is beginning to consider overturning the ban on urban chicken keeping.

“The City should embrace its agricultural roots,” said Abi, one of the CLUCK’s key coordinators. “Backyard chicken keeping represents a commitment to ensuring that residents have access to safe, healthy and local food.” Interest is growing in the rest of the region too. Residents in neighboring Citrus Heights, El Dorado and unincorporated Sacramento County have already expressed an interest in adopting the similar laws to those being discussed in the City of Sacramento.

Community Groups Push for Healthy Parks

Orinda, CA — Early on a Saturday morning in November, people from across the state met in a local church to share lessons learned from working to make their city and county parks pesticide-free. The event was sponsored by Pesticide Watch Education Fund and co-hosted by a wide variety of community-based organizations, including Mothers of Marin Against the Spray (MOMAS), Pesticide Free Zone, Pesticide-Free Sacramento, Parents for a Safer Environment.

“Pesticides used in parks pose threats to our most vulnerable populations, especially children and pets,” said Valerie Wyn, a leader of Mothers of Marin Against the Spray (MOMAS). From Sacramento to Marin to Contra Costa County, these groups have been working with local governments to create parks that successfully don’t use pesticides. In addition, the groups are supporting legislation authored by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma entitled The Healthy Parks Act.

“Local governments are creating healthy parks in a piecemeal approach. With state support, we can successfully transition neighborhood parks away from reliance on pesticides and fertilizers,” added Wyn. The event was sponsored by Pesticide Watch Education Fund and co-hosted by a wide variety of community-based organizations, including Mothers of Marin Against the Spray (MOMAS), Pesticide Free Zone, Pesticide-Free Sacramento, Parents for a Safer Environment.

“Pesticides used in parks pose threats to our most vulnerable populations, especially children and pets.”
  — Valerie Wyn, Mothers of Marin Against the Spray

Illegal chickens from a backyard in the City of Sacramento

Contact Us

Is your neighborhood threatened by pesticide pollution? Are your government officials or company executives not addressing these issues in a timely and effective manner? If so, Pesticide Watch Education Fund and our staff can come to your community and help you. Please contact us at 916.551.1883 or info@pesticidewatch.org.

Monterey County Residents Map People, Place & Health

Monterey, CA — On November 12th guests joined Pesticide Watch at the Portola Hotel and Spa in Monterey for an evening fundraiser. Local chefs, farmers and green business owners delighted guests with delicious food, exceptional green products and lots of creative conversations about the future of healthy living and sustainable agriculture. The keynote speakers for the event were Steven and Sheila Steinberg of Humboldt State University. Their presentation “People, Place and Health” provided a geo-spatial perspective that showed how pesticides move beyond the borders of the farms that use them: http://www.peopleplaceandhealth.org.

Illegal chickens from a backyard in the City of Sacramento

Spotlight: The Goat Herder

Moraga, CA — Susan JunFish fell into activism when she moved to Moraga and visited over a dozen pre-schools to place her son, Benjamin in 2002. After seeing the myriad of hazardous substances staff were inadvertently exposing children, she wrote a grant proposal that helped fund an all day conference with expert speakers on environmental health topics that drew over 60 participants from preschool directors to pediatricians. Out of that conference Parents for a Safer Environment (PSE) was born.

Susan still works to get toxins out of local schools; most recently though, after discovering that thousands of pounds of herbicides were being sprayed along county waterways, Susan new she needed to find and then implement a less toxic alternative.

In September 2009 PSE led a successful field trial of goat grazing as a safer alternative to herbicide spraying in a collaborative study with the Contra Costa County’s Flood Control District. The study showed that goats, even with full access to the water, were effective without contaminating the creek. Not only that, but after analyzing the data after the trial, PSE discovered that goats are 25% cheaper than herbicides.

Thanks to PSE’s research, the County will begin to wean themselves from the 5,000 plus pounds of herbicides being sprayed annually along 70 miles of creeks/channels.

“I feel a moral imperative to help prevent pain and suffering when there are safer and feasible solutions” says Susan.

Illegal chickens from a backyard in the City of Sacramento

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