

State approves pesticide despite cancer warning

Over objections from its own scientific advisers, the Schwarzenegger administration yesterday issued its final approval of a highly toxic pesticide that conventional strawberry growers say is critical to their \$2 billion industry.

Speaking in a conference call to reporters, Mary-Ann Warmerdam, whom Schwarzenegger appointed in 2004 to direct the state's Department of Pesticide Regulation, said that "methyl iodide is the most evaluated pesticide in the department's history."

That evaluation process included the appointment of a panel of scientists hand-picked from universities and research institutions across the country. Known as the Scientific Review Committee, its job was to help the regulation department consider how toxic methyl iodide might be to farm workers and people who live near strawberry fields.

Arguably, no one is more steeped in the science of methyl iodide and its potential health effects than these eight scientists. And every member of the panel had strenuously objected to the pesticide's approval.

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