

New leadership on pesticides in California

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Last week, Governor Jerry Brown signaled a new direction for California agriculture with the [appointment](#) of Brian Leahy as the state's chief pesticide regulator.

Leahy, a former conventional-turned-organic rice farmer, takes the helm of the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) at a key moment: the agency is embroiled in controversy over its decision to approve the [cancer-causing pesticide methyl iodide](#) despite strong scientific opposition to the chemical.

Leahy assumes leadership of the embattled agency after former director Mary-Ann Warmerdam resigned in order to take a position at The Clorox Company last spring. Warmerdam stands accused of a taking a [“mix-and-match”](#) approach with methyl iodide data, resulting in litigation against DPR and pesticide-maker Arysta on behalf of PAN, United Farm Workers and other organizations.

Regardless of the results of litigation, a broad coalition — including scientists, farmers, farmworkers and rural residents — is [urging Director Leahy](#) to make action on methyl iodide his first priority when he officially assumes his new role later this month.

A call for visionary leadership

Just before Governor Jerry Brown took office last year, PAN and the statewide coalition Californians for Pesticide Reform issued a [platform](#) outlining a clear path towards a vibrant, healthy agricultural economy in California.

PAN Organizing & Media Director Paul Towers recently spoke with reporters and [urged](#) Director Leahy to continue along that path:

Director Leahy brings a much needed new perspective to DPR, rooted in his experiences as a successful farmer, as a nonprofit manager, and as a public servant. He has a unique opportunity early in his term to prioritize making agriculture increasingly safe, healthy and climate-friendly.

Take Action» Urge Director Leahy to make action on methyl iodide his first priority when he assumes leadership on February 21. [Sign the petition today!](#)

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