

State chips in for fumigant alternative research

An industry effort to find ways to grow strawberries without the use of chemical fumigants - or even dirt - is getting \$500,000 in state assistance.

The grant, announced Wednesday by officials from the state Department of Pesticide Regulation and the California Strawberry Commission in a research field near Monterey Bay Academy, will expand a study into the replacement of soil with an alternative growing medium, such as peat or coconut fiber.

"Today's announcement signals a new direction for growing strawberries in the state with safe, cutting-edge, and healthy practices," said Paul Towers, spokesman for Pesticide Action Network.

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