

State convenes panel to seek pesticide alternatives for strawberries

With one fumigant on the way out and a potential replacement pulled from the market, the state's top pesticide regulator is looking to speed up research into alternatives to manage soil-borne disease and pests in strawberry fields.

Brian Leahy, director of the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, announced Tuesday the creation of a panel that will have until late fall to come up with a five-year action plan.

Leahy's action comes a month after the manufacturer of methyl iodide decided not to sell the controversial fumigant in the United States. That leaves farmers without an effective alternative to methyl bromide, an ozone-depleting fumigant being phased out under international treaty.

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