PRESS RELEASE

California Environmental Protection Agency

Department of Pesticide Regulation

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FEW RESIDUES FOUND IN FRESH PRODUCE MONITORING PROGRAM

SACRAMENTO -- Results from the nation's largest state residue monitoring program again confirm that most fresh produce contains no detectable pesticide residues, and that virtually all residues that are found are well below allowable levels, said James W. Wells, director of Cal-EPA's Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Wells made the observation with the release Tuesday of *Residues in Fresh Produce - 1990,* DPR's annual report on its produce monitoring program.

DPR's produce monitoring includes several elements, the largest of which is the marketplace surveillance program, in which commodity samples are taken from throughout the channels of trade--at ports and other points of entry, packing sites, and wholesale and retail outlets.

"Marketplace surveillance is enforcement-oriented," said Wells. "The federal government sets the allowable limits for pesticide residues based on the highest residue that could be expected from legal use of a pesticide. Therefore, a residue over the tolerance level can also be a good indicator of illegal use."

Of the 8,278 samples taken of 167 different commodities in the marketplace surveillance program, eight out of 10 had no detectable residues. Only a fraction of one percent--0.17--contained residues over the allowable limits. Another 0.62 percent had residues of a pesticide not authorized for use on the commodity. These detections, usually at low levels, are often the result from drift of a pesticide from its intended target.

"That means less than one percent of the produce we test has illegal pesticide residue," said Wells, "a statistic that has remained pretty constant the last few years. This would indicate that illegal use of pesticides on California produce is a seldom-seen problem."

He added that the way samples are taken tends to bias toward finding illegal residues.

"In selecting what commodities to sample, we consider usage patterns and volume, commodity treatment history, the dietary importance of the commodity, known problem areas, past monitoring results, and our knowledge of local usage. That means results may be biased toward higher violation rates than if we collected samples in a truly random fashion," Wells said.

The annual report also highlights results of DPR's Priority Pesticide Program, in which monitoring is concentrated on pesticides of special health interest. Unlike the Marketplace Surveillance samples, in this program only crops known to have been treated with a targeted pesticide are tested. Because the crop is known to have been treated, DPR obtains the most

accurate data on which to base estimates of dietary exposure.

"Of the 2,598 samples taken in this program, 92 percent had no detectable residue," said Wells.

"The Priority Pesticide program is a key element of our food safety program, and we feel these results clearly confirm what scientists have said for many years: the `problem' of pesticide residues in fresh produce is more one of perception, than reality."

For a copy of the 64-page report, send a $9.00 check to: Cashier, California Department of Pesticide Regulation, 1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. A free copy of the report narrative and charts, without tabular data, is also available from the DPR's Pesticide Enforcement Branch, at the same address.

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Attached: *Executive Summary* from the report, and selected charts. Members of the media who wish a copy of the full report should contact Veda Federighi, (916) 654-1117.