



# ***From the Director***

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## **Why DPR Opted for an External Peer Review of Methyl Iodide**

Finding a replacement for the fumigant methyl bromide has been elusive despite nearly two decades of extensive research by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of California and others. This pesticide is effective against a wide variety of pests, including nematodes, diseases and weeds.

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) understands the urgency to find an alternate for methyl bromide, which is being phased out under an international treaty to protect the earth's ozone layer. California growers are among the biggest consumers of this fumigant in the United States which they use to prepare fields for planting strawberries and other high-value crops like raspberries, nursery crops, grapes, walnuts and almonds.

While DPR's role is not to find a replacement for methyl bromide, the department appreciates the role fumigants play in both production as well as in the ability to meet standards from buyers – both domestic and international. We are, however, responsible for the registration and sale of pesticides to protect people and the environment.

Methyl iodide, which is not known to contribute to greenhouse gases, was registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) in 2007 as a replacement for methyl bromide. It is registered for use in 47 other states and being used in 12 of them. It cannot be sold or applied in California unless it is registered by DPR.

When DPR received the complete application to register methyl iodide in 2007, we chose to conduct a risk assessment because numerous animal studies have shown that it poses a potential risk to public health. The intent of a risk assessment is to determine potential risks to human health and the environment and the circumstances under which a product can be used if it is registered.

Our risk assessment reflects California's unique geography and agricultural practices. California's many microclimates support fruits, nuts and vegetables that require hand labor, with the potential to inadvertently overexpose farmworkers to pesticides. In addition, urban development has encroached on our agricultural lands, which means buffer zones and other restrictions are often required of pesticide applicators in the agricultural-urban interface to minimize risk to the public.

DPR opted to include an external peer review of the risk assessment to reaffirm that our evaluation of methyl iodide's potential risk to farmworkers and bystanders is based on scientifically valid standards. DPR has statutory authority to include an external review in the registration process, although it is not required by law. The risk assessment will

serve as the basis for the decision on whether methyl iodide should be registered in California. Our intent is to make a registration decision by the end of the year.

The external peer review panel is chaired by John Froines, Ph.D., director of the Center for Occupational and Environmental Health at the University of California, Los Angeles. He has convened a panel of eight nationally and internationally renowned experts in various scientific fields to evaluate our work.

Dr. Froines' panel will hold a public workshop Sept. 24-25 in Sacramento at the Pagoda Building, 429 J St. The first day will be devoted to presentations by state scientists. The second day will provide opportunity for public comments. We strongly encourage you to participate in this process by submitting comments on the final draft risk assessment or attending the workshop.

Following standard procedure, DPR's draft methyl iodide risk assessment underwent peer review by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), also part of the California Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. EPA. Their comments, as well as those submitted by Arysta, LLC, the manufacturer of methyl iodide, are incorporated into the final draft assessment posted at: [www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov).

For additional information about the risk assessment process, please review this fact sheet on DPR's Web site at: <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/risk/riskassessment.htm>

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