

California Produce Shown Again to be Safe for Consumers

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) found that most fruits and vegetables sold to consumers in 2016 had no pesticide residue or were in compliance with established pesticide residue requirements. DPR collected 3,585 fruit and vegetable samples from grocery stores, farmers markets and distribution centers throughout California. The samples included organic produce as well as produce from different countries. Samples analyzed include commonly consumed commodities, with special emphasis on food consumed by children. In all, 96 percent of all samples had no pesticide residue or met the strict pesticide residue tolerances set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Produce found to exceed established pesticide residue tolerances or found to have residue for a pesticide product that has no established tolerance is in violation. A tolerance is the amount of pesticide that may safely remain in or on fresh produce at time of sale. However, sampled produce found to have illegal tolerances does not necessarily indicate a potential health concern. When produce with illegal residue is found it is immediately removed from the marketplace and the produce is traced to its source of origin. Growers found to have violated pesticide residue laws face severe fines from DPR and the local Agricultural Commissioner, including possible destruction of any commodity remaining in the production site.

Growers use pesticides to control agricultural pests as part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach which incorporates pest identification, setting economic thresholds for infestations, monitoring, prevention and control. IPM incorporates various pest management strategies used by growers on their farms and is not reliant solely on the use of pesticides. Federal and State programs that regulate pesticide registration, pesticide use requirements and licensing of individuals who recommend and use pesticides help to ensure the safe and effective use of pesticides. For fresh fruits and vegetables, the EPA sets requirements for allowable pesticide residue tolerances based on scientific data with an emphasis to protect human health.

California has the most extensive pesticide residue program in the nation. In 2016, California grown produce accounted for 24% of all the samples tested. Only about 4% of all the samples analyzed was found in violation of established residue tolerances and these were predominantly found on produce originating outside of the U.S. This further indicates the effectiveness of the strict laws and regulations California growers must follow to ensure a safe food supply. For complete details on the 2016 pesticide residue monitoring report, please visit DPR's website at:

www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/enforce/residue/rsmonmnu.htm