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# EPA Releases Strategy to Better Protect Endangered Species from Insecticides Using Commonsense Practices, Provides Flexibilities to States and Growers

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## Contact Information

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**WASHINGTON** – Today, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its final Insecticide Strategy that identifies practical protections for federally endangered and threatened species from the use of insecticides, while providing flexibility for pesticide users and growers. The Strategy identifies mitigations aimed at protecting more than 900 species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that EPA considers when it registers a new insecticide or reevaluates an existing one.

*“Today’s action is another example of how protecting our environment and safeguarding our economy can go hand in hand,” said EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin. “We have found commonsense ways to keep endangered species safe that won’t place unneeded burden on the growers who rely on these tools for their livelihood, and which are necessary to ensure a safe and plentiful food supply. We are committed to ensuring the agriculture community has the tools they need to protect our country, especially our food supply, from pests and diseases.”*

*“American agriculture demonstrates that production and stewardship go hand in hand,”* **said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins.** *“Thank you to Administrator Zeldin for working towards unleashing regulatory burdens for American farmers & ranchers with the release of this final insecticide strategy today. This strategy provides much needed improvements that will undoubtedly better protect U.S. homegrown crops from pests and diseases. We look forward to continued partnership with EPA to ensure our growers continue to have the crop protection tools and flexibility needed to feed, fuel, and clothe our nation and the world.”*

*“EPA’s numerous pragmatic improvements to the draft Insecticide Strategy have created a final strategy that can be better implemented by applicators while also protecting threatened and endangered species. We are grateful EPA has crafted this strategy by listening to, among others, constructive feedback from state agriculture departments, as they are the lead agency tasked with implementing and enforcing pesticide regulations in 43 states as well as the territory of Puerto Rico. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture is eager to continue to work with EPA to ensure state lead agencies have the resources and clarity to meaningfully enforce this strategy,”* **said National Association of State Departments of Agriculture CEO Ted McKinney.**

*“Farmers are dedicated to responsibly using pesticides, and frequent updates to the pesticide strategies are important to ensure the health and safety of America’s families. EPA understands there cannot be an effective conservation strategy as a nation without a meaningful partnership with farmers and ranchers. As we evaluate the final strategy in full, we urge EPA to continue to refine and improve upon the plan to enable farmers to grow healthy food for the nation while caring for, and improving, the natural resources they’ve been entrusted with,”* **said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall.**

*“The American Soybean Association appreciates EPA for incorporating common sense improvements into its Insecticide Strategy, especially with little time to do so before its court deadline. These enhancements will help make Endangered Species Act implementation easier for U.S. farmers; however, more work remains to be done, including reforming how EPA assesses risks to species to ensure the process is using the best available science. ASA thanks EPA for its progress to date and looks forward to working with the agency to advance additional improvements in the days ahead,”* **said American Soybean Association President and Kentucky Soybean Farmer Caleb**

**Ragland.**

*"We are appreciative of the EPA's efforts to identify commonsense ways of protecting endangered species from insecticides," said **National Corn Growers Association President and Illinois Farmer Kenneth Hartman Jr.** "Our growers support the agency's approach to providing mitigation relief through enhanced conservation processes that give growers more credit for their participation than was initially proposed. We look forward to continued dialogue with the EPA as we move forward on the path to protect species as well as the food, feed and fuel supply."*

*"We look forward to reviewing EPA's Insecticide Strategy and appreciate the Agency's continued efforts to engage stakeholders on mitigations that support fresh produce growers' ability to produce the healthy and nutritious food Americans require, while being protective of threatened and endangered species. We commit to working collaboratively with EPA to support this evolving effort and ensure that the strategy rewards grower innovations to reduce risk to species," said **International Fresh Produce Association Vice President for U.S. Government Relations Rebeckah Adcock.***

*"The National Cotton Council thanks the administration for listening to America's farmers in updating the EPA Insecticide Strategy. By updating buffer distances, tailoring mitigation to real-world conditions, and recognizing conservation efforts, the new strategy strengthens environmental protections without compromising our nation's safe and secure supply of food, feed and fiber," said **National Cotton Council Chairman and Producer from Tunica, MS Patrick Johnson.***

*"USA Rice applauds EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin's willingness to listen to the concerns of America's rice farmers and his commitment to developing a more practical, balanced Endangered Species Act Insecticide Strategy. We are particularly appreciative that Administrator Zeldin is improving these strategies with the goals of both protecting species, as well as the livelihoods of farmers. The revised strategy reflects the EPA's growing recognition of the real-world impacts of regulations at the field level and its efforts to provide the flexibility farmers need to comply. We are likewise optimistic that in the revised strategy, EPA is modifying buffer distance requirements to reflect the mitigating benefits of the technologies that have been developed and implemented by the agricultural sector to reduce spray drift. USA Rice looks forward to continuing to work closely with Administrator Zeldin and the EPA to ensure future policies remain grounded in practicality and science," said **USA Rice Regulatory Affairs and Food Safety***

***Committee Chairman and Arkansas Rice Farmer David Petter.***

Earlier this year, Administrator Zeldin announced his Powering the Great American Comeback Initiative to advance the agency's core mission of protecting human health and the environment while energizing the American economy. Specifically, this Strategy advances Pillar Three: "permitting reform, cooperative federalism and cross-agency partnership." The final Strategy is the culmination of continued communication between EPA, its federal partners including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and FWS, and other stakeholders.

EPA will continue to work with stakeholders to modify and update these documents as additional information becomes available. In addition, EPA anticipates continued engagement with stakeholders, including our federal and state partners, to ensure effective implementation of the Strategy.

Read the final Insecticide Strategy <<https://epa.gov/endangered-species/strategy-protect-endangered-species-insecticides>>. The Insecticide Strategy and accompanying support documents, including a Response to Comments document and an updated Ecological Mitigation Support Document describing mitigations and supporting data that inform implementation of both the herbicide and insecticide strategies, will be available on Regulations.gov <<https://epa.gov/www.regulations.gov>> in docket EPA-HQ-OPP-2024-0299 [↗](https://www.regulations.gov/docket/epa-hq-opp-2024-0299) <<https://www.regulations.gov/docket/epa-hq-opp-2024-0299>>.

**Background**

The draft Insecticide Strategy [↗](https://www.regulations.gov/document/epa-hq-opp-2024-0299-0005) <<https://www.regulations.gov/document/epa-hq-opp-2024-0299-0005>> was released in July 2024 and was followed by a 60-day public comment period during which more than 26,000 comments were received, with over 230 unique comments. In response to information provided through the public comments, EPA made several changes in the final Strategy, supported by scientific analyses, to provide greater flexibility and options for the agricultural community, while ensuring that endangered species are protected. Some of the science-based modifications include:

- Reducing buffer distances across all application methods;
- Providing credit for any reduction in the proportion of a treated field for ground applications;

- Developing a process to qualify conservation programs that will give growers more credit for being part of a conservation program than initially proposed;
- Developing a process to qualify external parties that would assess a grower's farms and determine the existing mitigation points that could be achieved by practices a grower already has in place;
- Updating key data sources and identification of invertebrate species that may occur on agricultural fields; and

Adding a Pesticide Use Limitation Area (PULA) group for generalist species that reside in wetlands to reduce mitigations applied outside of wetland habitats.

Last updated on April 29, 2025