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High Levels of Dangerous 'Forever Chemicals' Found in California's Most-Used Insecticide

40% of Tested Agricultural Pesticide Products Contain PFAS

WASHINGTON— California's most-used insecticide, along with two other pesticides, is contaminated with potentially dangerous levels of PFAS "forever chemicals," according to [test results](#) released today by the Center for Biological Diversity and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

Intrepid 2F is the [most widely applied](#) insecticide product in the state of California and the second most widely used pesticide product in the state, behind only Roundup. In 2021, the most recent year data are available, more than 1.7 million pounds of it [were applied](#) to over 1.3 million cumulative acres of California land. Use is highest in the Central Valley on crops such as almonds, grapes, peaches and pistachios.

The findings that 3 of 7 agricultural pesticides tested contain high levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS — in one case far exceeding what the Environmental Protection Agency considers safe in drinking water — highlights the need for much broader testing and removal of contaminated products, according to the groups.

"I can't imagine anything that could make these products any more dangerous than they already are, but apparently my imagination isn't big enough," said Nathan Donley, environmental health science director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "The EPA has to take control of this situation and remove pesticide products that are contaminated with these extremely dangerous, persistent chemicals."

PFAS do not break down in the environment and are associated with immune system suppression, liver damage, thyroid disease, reduced fertility, high cholesterol, obesity and cancer. PFAS have been [detected](#) in more than 330 animal species around the world, including many that are at risk of extinction.

The testing, commissioned by the Center and conducted by an independent, certified lab, found PFAS in 3 out of 7 agricultural pesticides tested. No PFAS were detected in concentrations above the detection limit in the two residential pesticide products that were tested.

Malathion 5EC, a product that contains the known neurotoxin malathion, was found to also contain 510 parts-per-trillion (ppt) perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and 680 ppt perfluoroheptanesulfonic acid (PFHpS). The level of PFOA found in this product is over *100,000 times higher* than the level EPA [considers safe](#) in drinking water (0.004 ppt).

Oberon 2SC was found to contain 1,500 ppt perfluorobutanoic acid (PFBA), and Intrepid 2F had 350 ppt of perfluorobutanesulfonic acid (PFBS).

"While communities around the country are struggling to remove PFAS from their drinking-water supplies, we are spraying millions of acres of our land with the same toxic chemicals," said PEER's science policy director Kyla Bennett, a scientist and attorney formerly with the EPA. "It's nonsensical; we can't protect our drinking water unless and until we get PFAS out of all pesticides."

This is not the first time PFAS have been found in pesticide products. [Testing](#) done by PEER and separately by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the EPA [found](#) high levels of PFAS in several mosquito insecticide products sprayed throughout states like Massachusetts, Florida and New York.

PFAS have also been [found](#) in some widely used flea and tick pesticide products.

Two of the detected PFAS, PFBS and PFHpS, are not known to leach from fluorinated containers, which the EPA [considers](#) the primary source of PFAS contamination in pesticides.

These results suggest that at least some of the identified PFAS contamination of agricultural products is coming from other unknown sources.

The groups on Monday submitted the test results to both the [EPA](#) and the [California Department of Pesticide Regulation](#), asking them to remove these products from use until contamination can be removed from their supply lines.



Pesticide spraying/USDA [Image is available for media use.](#)

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