

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## THE COUNTY OF FRESNO DECLARES A LOCAL EMERGENCY TO ALLOW COMMERCIAL GROWERS TO USE NEONICOTINOID PESTICIDES TO COMBAT THE BEET LEAFHOPPER INSECT ON TOMATO CROPS

**FRESNO, CA** – Effective April 17, 2024, the County of Fresno's County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director Paul Nerland declared a local emergency pursuant to Fresno County Ordinance Code 2.44.050 and California Government Code Section 8630.

Upon this Proclamation of Local Emergency, the Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner is authorized to allow commercial growers to use neonicotinoid pesticides on an emergency basis to combat the Beet Leafhopper (BLH) insect in Fresno County in accordance with pest conditions and timeframes established by the Commissioner. State laws apply to such authorized uses, and the operator of the property where these pesticides are authorized for use is required to obtain the written recommendation from a licensed agricultural pest control adviser.

The BLH insect carries the Beet Curly Top Virus, which is a plant disease known to cause serious damage to tomato crops. The BLH insect is a pest to both fresh market and processing tomatoes mainly on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley farming region. California is the largest producer of processing tomatoes and the second largest producer of fresh tomatoes in the U.S. Fresno County is a significant producer of processing tomatoes and fresh tomatoes. Tomatoes were listed as the seventh largest crop revenue in Fresno County in 2022 with a value of \$429,263,000.

Neonicotinoids are the most reliable pesticides controlling the BLH insect. The imminent migration of BLH insect into Fresno County is an extreme threat to tomato crops.

According to California state authorities, the emergency use of neonicotinoid pesticides is the most efficacious method to mitigate this threat against tomato crops.

This local emergency will be in effect and considered for ratification by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors at its next regular meeting on Tuesday, April 23, 2024. If ratified, the need for the local emergency will be reviewed by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors within 60 days to determine whether to continue the local emergency or terminate it.

The Commissioner will provide information to the public, including commercial growers, regarding those districts or areas designated by the Commissioner where pest conditions are identified, and where pesticide applications may occur, including timeframes for such applications on the Commissioner website at [www.fresnocountyca.gov/Departments/Agricultural-Commissioner](http://www.fresnocountyca.gov/Departments/Agricultural-Commissioner).

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