May 25, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Philip C. Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Bob Wieckowski
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #2
State Capitol, Room 4085
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard Bloom
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #3
State Capitol, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Sustainable Agriculture Funding & Request for Pesticide Protections

Dear Budget Chairs Skinner and Ting and Subcommittee Chairs Wieckowski and Bloom,

On behalf of the undersigned environmental, health, community, farming, and other public interest organizations, we write to:

(1) express strong support for robust investments in California’s transition to safer, sustainable agriculture, and

(2) request language in the 2021-22 budget to ensure that the state maximizes the beneficial impacts of these investments for farm workers and communities, biodiversity and ecosystems, and farmers transitioning to safer pest management.

For too long, the environmental and health costs of toxic pesticide use have been borne by society at large, and not by the industries that use them. To ensure that the state intentionally addresses the most urgent issues associated with continued pesticide sales in California, the FY 2021-22 budget should fund:

• **$20 million for a Community Support Fund** at the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to support residents of agricultural communities negatively impacted by pesticide use. The Fund should be used to establish community green spaces and protective buffer zones, and to provide PPE, indoor air filters, and other immediate protections identified through a process by which residents in the areas of the state at greatest risk of pesticide exposure have opportunities for input and meaningful public participation to prioritize protections based on their local pesticide and air quality conditions and what will work best for them. This additional funding could complement the Administration’s proposals\(^1\) to invest $125 million in statewide park development and community revitalization and $200 million in urban greening.

• **$6 million to restore and expand the pesticide air monitoring network** and link monitoring results to enforcement actions and increased oversight of pesticides

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\(^1\) May Revise, Outdoor Access for All (statewide park development and community revitalization program), Climate Resilience Package ($200 million for urban greening over 2 years).
detected in the air, to ensure public health protections for the most vulnerable. The Administration and Senate’s proposals\(^2\) include funding for this network, but neither includes language directing DPR to link detection events with protective actions.

- **$20 million to enhance implementation of integrated pest management (IPM) practices**\(^3\) should specifically support programs focused on (1) improving on-farm ecosystems to reduce pest pressure and (2) cultivating more resilient farms through sustainable, organic, and ecological farming practices that build healthy soil, including:
  - $10 million for the Biologically Integrated Farming Systems (BIFS) program;
  - $8 million for cooperative agreements with California universities should specifically support: the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, the UC Statewide Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program, and the Organic Agriculture Institute. These programs should create advisor and specialist positions that focus on sustainable IPM, ecological, and organic systems with an emphasis on conducting multi-language and culturally appropriate outreach and research to support the needs of small-scale and socially disadvantaged farmers. Priorities for research funded by this item shall be determined in consultation with the Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel and should include organic pest management, biocontrol, and insect ecology.

- **$12 million for critical infrastructure for biodiversity reliance – a DNA Barcode Reference Library.**\(^4\)

- **$30 million for a Pollinator Habitat Program** to expand pollinator habitat and forage on private land.\(^5\) We also request complementary funding for (1) a Monarch Rescue project to pause the imminent extinction of western migratory monarchs and (2) a Statewide Local Native Seed Bank to help farmers and conservationists create pollinator habitat.

These proposed inclusions augment the Administration’s bold pesticide proposals, which we also strongly support:

- **Shift to tiered pesticide mill fees**\(^6\) that more closely reflect the greater regulatory burdens posed by the most dangerous pesticides. The current flat fee structure is outdated, and it should be amended to ensure that fees on pesticide sales are commensurate with the costs and threats different classes of pesticides may pose to the state, its people, and its resources.

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\(^2\) $4 million for air monitoring is included in Senate’s Agriculture Budget Plan and the January Budget, Transition to Safer, Sustainable Pest Management, 3930-024-BCP-2021-GB; 8570-040-BCP-2021-GB.


\(^5\) May Revise, Climate Smart Agriculture for Sustainability and Resiliency, 8570-083-BCP-2021-MR; 3900-077-BCP-2021-MR; 3900-081-BCP2021-MR.

\(^6\) January Budget, Transition to Safer, Sustainable Pest Management, 3930-024-BCP-2021-GB; 8570-040-BCP-2021-GB.
• Invest $10 million in a pesticide notification network,\(^7\) to alert the public to upcoming pesticide applications.

Overreliance on toxic pesticides is hurting people and our natural resources, and we are committed to advancing better solutions. With our proposed additions, the Administration and Legislature’s proposed investments address urgent crises and are an important step toward a holistic approach to pest management that protects our health, resources, and communities.

Sincerely,

Allison Johnson, Staff Attorney
Natural Resources Defense Council

Brian Shobe, Associate Policy Director
CalCAN

Catherine Dodd PhD, RN, Policy Advisor
California Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

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Jamie Fanous, Policy Advocate
Community Alliance with Family Farmers

Jan Dietrick, MPH, Director
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Andy Fisher, Executive Director
Ecological Farming Association

Laura Deehan, State Director
Environment California

Bill Allayaud, California Director of Government Affairs
Environmental Working Group

Lendri Purcell, Co-Founder & President Families Advocating for Chemical & Toxics Safety (FACTS)

Heather Podoll, Partnership & Advocacy Coordinator
Fibershed

Mayra Becerra, Chair
Ivanhoe Community Council

Julia Jordan, Policy Coordinator
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability

Patty Healy, Founder
Malibu Monarch Project

\(^7\) May Revise, Pesticide Notification Network, 3930-031-BCP-2021-MR.
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