



Statement of the Safe Ag Safe Schools Future Leaders of Change on DPR's Strategic Plan 2024-2028

The Department of Pesticide Regulation's "Strategic Plan for 2024-2028"¹ is not a plan to build protection from harmful pesticides in farmworker communities. It's a plan to make sure our communities continue to get poisoned and permanently damaged not just for the next 5-years, but far into the future.

The plan is so outrageous – so far from what we need – that it feels like DPR just wants to try to legitimize it by being able to claim DPR "listened to farmworker communities" in Watsonville and Tulare, where they are holding public hearings, without any intention of really listening.

We reject the plan.

Most of it seems to be based on DPR's Sustainable Pest Management timeline with a due date of 2050 to eliminate (currently unspecified) "priority pesticides." With this first 5-year preview of DPR's approach, it's clear DPR is acting like the student who waits until the last minute to finish an assignment. We admit, we've been there. But if DPR waits until the last minute – 2049 – to actually make real protections from pesticides, it will be too late. It will be way too late for another generation in communities like ours.

This is not just a slow-walk plan; it's a walk backwards plan.

DPR already has a priority list of the most harmful pesticides to address,² study and then regulate. Their new plan says a group called the "Sustainable Pest Management Priorities Advisory Committee" – which DPR hasn't even selected yet, ten months after they announced the plan – will begin sometime, possibly within the next 5 years, to come up with yet another list of what DPR calls "priority pesticides." That sounds to us like DPR is starting over, but worse, this time giving Big Ag and pesticide applicators in their Advisory Committee a vote on which pesticides will be chosen. Those groups do not have an interest in reducing pesticide use. They think it will cost them money. They shouldn't be involved in a committee that is supposed to make decisions prioritizing public health rather than profits.

¹ https://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/dept/planning/strategic_plan.pdf

² <https://www.pesticidereform.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/FINAL-Letter-DPR-risk-assess-mitig-March-2023.pdf>

One of the cruelest jokes in this plan is that it calls for -- some time in the next five years -- potentially mitigating as few as two pesticides a year. It is a fact that growers in the State of California were allowed to use at least 133 pesticides in 2020 that are banned or not approved in the 27 countries of the European Union. We're in high school, but elementary school math tells us that if DPR were to ban pesticides at a rate of 2 per year, it would take more than 66 years to make California farmworker communities as safe from harmful pesticides as European Union farmworker communities are today.

And that's if DPR actually bans these pesticides, but that isn't what DPR means by "mitigate." Mitigate, in the DPR experience, could mean simply suggesting that County Agricultural Commissioners do something like notifying residents nearby that a highly toxic pesticide will be applied ... whether they like it or not. So, it's likely that as far away as 2090, we won't be any closer to the health protection standards of the European Union of 2023.

Evidence of that bleak likelihood is DPR's definition of "success" regarding priority pesticide use in the future: "success ... is measured by ongoing 5% annual reductions in Priority Pesticide use." Again, back to our elementary school math, there were 2 million pounds of chloropicrin --the lung-damaging agent banned in 36 countries³ -- in Monterey County in 2021. Since, "success" would be a 5% decline, that would mean we should feel good about 1,900,000 pounds the following year? And then 1,805,000 the next year. At that rate, we'll never get rid of chloropicrin in our lifetimes. And we're teenagers.

DPR's "Strategic Plan" is not merely an insult to our communities and to our generation ... and even to our future grandchildren's generation; it is a planned attack on us. Throw it out.

Pretty words can't disguise the environmental racism of this plan; it's time for real protective action.

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³ <https://pan-international.org/pan-international-consolidated-list-of-banned-pesticides/>