



Central Coast Ag Task Force

Weekly E-News

March 11, 2011 - Vol IV, Issue 11

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Dear CCATF Member:

This is the Central Coast's new Weekly E-News. Your membership includes 1-2 newsletters each week from the Central Coast Ag Task Force highlighting numerous issues of interest to our industry. Please send any comments or suggestions to darlene@ccatf.org. To gain access to the site's password-protected areas and thereby read the links below online, please visit the [Create An Account](#) page.

EPA Grants \$32 Million to Air Pollution Research at Universities

Yahoo news- March 7, 2011
[Rachel Krech](#)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced that they will be [awarding grants to four universities to fund air pollution research](#). The EPA committed \$32 million in funds and awarded \$8 million to each institution over a period of five years, which included the University of Washington (Seattle, Wash.), Michigan State University (East Lansing, Mich.), Harvard University (Boston, Mass.), and Emory University/Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta, Ga.). The grants from the EPA to these four institutions will go to establish new Clean Air Research Centers. Here researchers can use cutting edge technology to further study air pollution problems that occur all over the United States. Specifically, the new centers will focus their research on how different compositions of air pollution affect human health. "These centers are critical to understanding how to improve air quality and protect Americans' health from complex mixtures of air pollutants," said Dr. Paul Anastas, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Research and Development. "The centers will focus on important scientific questions remaining in air research."

CCATF

E-NEWS

The Central Coast Agricultural Task Force has been collectively monitoring, researching, disseminating, and acting on any issue of benefit or impact on the capabilities of agriculture in the central coast, with an emphasis on local issues since 1984. The purpose of the Central Coast Ag Task Force (CCATF) is to monitor, appropriate, governmental boards, councils, commissions, and/or agencies sufficient to keep CCATF Members advised of actual or potential issues of benefit or detriment to the mission of CCATF, which is the long-term viability of agricultural on the Central Coast.

The articles in this and other CCATF newsletters are for informational purposes only on issues that are either a benefit or impact on agriculture.

Water Quality on the Central Coast- Farmers working on long term solutions for improved water quality -our shared community goal.

The Ag Alternative Proposal blends science and practicality

to improve water quality for a sustainable environment

and a viable farming community.

Ag Committee Holds Hearing on Reducing

The research is supposed to be cutting-edge as well, especially since the majority of previous studies have only analyzed one specific air pollutant on human health. These institutions will be able to look at certain ratios of one air pollutant to one or more other air pollutants. The reasoning behind this kind of research is that it is rare for people to be exposed to only one kind of air pollutant at a time (whether it be carbon monoxide, particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, lead, etc) and usually people encounter and breathe in air that contains numerous toxic compounds.

A majority of the research is also going to focus on groups of people who are more susceptible to health problems caused from air pollution, namely young children and the elderly, as well as though with pre-existing medical conditions such as asthma. From grouping individuals by age, the research will hopefully show how age correlates with certain health problems from air pollution.

Although the EPA is suffering severe budget cuts, they have pushed [air quality problems as one of their top priorities](#). Academic institutions can often serve as excellent facilities for cutting edge research, especially since they can attract top scientists and provide students and faculty with new education opportunities within their fields. Federally funded research centers can also bring in further donations to the institutions to pursue much more research.

Rachel Krech provides an in-depth look at current environmental issues and local Chicago news stories. As a college student from the Chicago suburbs pursuing two science degrees, she applies her knowledge and passion to both topics to garner further public awareness.

California Air Board

Six Air Districts are offering over \$100 million in financial incentives to owners of trucks used in goods movement to upgrade to cleaner technologies through truck replacement with cleaner diesel or alternative fuel models, engine replacement, or retrofit installation.

Please see the Program website at: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/gmbond> to get helpful tips for truck owners and links to the participating Air Districts to apply for funds.

These are competitive grants for eligible California-based truck fleets of all sizes. The Districts will be accepting applications from March through April 2011. Truck owners can apply through one of the following Districts: Bay Area, Sacramento, San Joaquin Valley, South Coast, San Diego, or Imperial. Owners should submit only one application for

Regulations

03/09/2011

NAFB News Service

The House Ag Committee held a hearing Wednesday to mark up H.R. 872, the Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2011. Committee Chairman Collin Peterson says this legislation would relieve producers from a potentially costly regulatory burden that would do little, if anything, to protect the environment. In 2006 the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned an EPA rule which specifically exempted permitting of certain pesticide applications under the Clean Water Act. The court's decision pre-empts the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act by the Clean Water Act. Peterson said this was not the intent of Congress.

The proposed legislation would restore congressional intent and address the court's ruling by amending both the Clean Water Act and FIFRA to prohibit permits for pesticide application when pesticides are applied consistent with FIFRA. Peterson said, - Clean Water Act permitting requirements would place a massive burden and responsibility on the states and the EPA. The last thing we need is more regulation coming from the EPA in this area.

According to Mr. Peterson, - for too long we've watched organizations use the courts to twist laws against American farmers and agricultural production. If we don't work together to find a solution, producers will likely continue being told how to operate by lawyers and judges who don't understand agriculture. The courts are not the place to decide agriculture policy. This legislation is a step in the right direction to address this problem.

House Ag Committee passes legislation exempting pesticides from NPDES program

Wednesday March 09 2011 agra-net.com

The House Agriculture Committee unanimously approved legislation today to largely exempt pesticides from the Clean Water Act's permitting requirements. The bill -- H.R. 872 -- amends FIFRA and the Clean Water Act to bar EPA from requiring National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for FIFRA-registered pesticides.

each truck. Once the application period closes, each District will evaluate and rank the applications it receives.

The \$1 billion Proposition 1B: Goods Movement Emission Reduction Program is a partnership between the State Air Resources Board and local agencies (like air districts and seaports) to quickly reduce air pollution emissions and health risk from freight movement along California's trade corridors.

If you have any questions, please call our Goods Movement Information Line at: (916) 44-GOODS (444-6637) or contact us via email at: gmbond@arb.ca.gov.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL
WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD

Wednesday, March 16, 2011 at 2:30 p.m.

1. [Roll Call](#)[RogerBriggs [805/549-3140](tel:8055493140)]..... Board
Members Present

2. [Introductions](#) [Roger Briggs].....
Guests and Staff Present

3. [Approval of February 3, 2011 Meeting Minutes](#)..... Board Motion

The legislation would effectively dissolve the ongoing controversy over EPA's effort to craft a NPDES general permit for pesticides applied to, over or near water -- a process driven by a 2009 appellate court ruling that vacated a 2006 agency rule that exempted pesticides from the NPDES program.

Supplemental information for the March 17, 2011 Board Meeting - Item 14

(Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands, Order No. R3-2011-0006) is posted on the Central Coast Water Board website. Additional details are available at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_info/agendas/2011/march/Item_14/index.shtml

California Air Resources Board

The California Air Resources Board is announcing a public meeting on the Carl Moyer Memorial Air Quality Standards Attainment Program Guidelines: Interested members of the public may present comments relating to this matter orally or in writing at the meeting and may also be submitted by postal mail or electronic submittal before the meeting. To be considered by the Board, written comments not physically submitted at the meeting must be received no later than 12:00 noon, April 27, 2011, and addressed to the following:

Postal mail: Clerk of the Board, Air Resources Board

- 4. [Report by State Water Resources Control Board Liaison](#)..... Status Report

[Frances Spivy-Weber [916/341-5615](tel:916/341-5615)]

Uncontested Items

- 5. [Uncontested Item Calendar](#)..... Board Motion

Cleanup Cases

- 6. [San Paso Truck Stop, 81 Wellsona Road](#) ,..... Update/Information Paso Robles, San Luis Obispo County [Corey Walsh [805/542-4781](tel:805/542-4781)]

- *7. [Emergency, Abandoned, Recalcitrant Account Priority](#) List for Fiscal Year 2011-2012..... Resolution No. R3-2011-0016 (Underground Storage Tank Cleanup Fund) [John Goni [805/542-4628](tel:805/542-4628)]

Enforcement

- 8. [EnforcementReport](#)..... Status Report [Harvey Packard [805/542-4639](tel:805/542-4639)]

Administrative Items

- 9. [PublicForum](#)..... Board Direction

[Any person may address the Board regarding a matter within the Board's jurisdiction that is not related to an item on this meeting agenda. Comments will generally be limited to three minutes, unless otherwise directed by the Chair. Any person wishing to make a longer presentation should contact the Executive Officer at least one week prior to the meeting (the Thursday before a Thursday meeting). Comments regarding matters that are scheduled for a future meeting will be restricted.]

Waste Discharge Requirements

1001 I Street, Sacramento,
California 95814 To View the
Notice and Electronic
submittal:

[http://www.arb.ca.gov/lispub/comm/
bclist.php](http://www.arb.ca.gov/lispub/comm/bclist.php)

The proposed revisions will also
be available electronically on
ARB's website at
[www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/moyer/moyer.
htm](http://www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/moyer/moyer.htm)

Inquiries regarding this matter should be
directed to Ms. Heather Arias, Manager of
the Planning and Regulatory Development
Section, at [\(916\) 324-6429](tel:9163246429) or to Mr. Sam
Gregor, Air Pollution Specialist, at [\(916\)
323-0005](tel:9163230005).

CCATF Board Meeting

**Wednesday March 23, 2011
3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.
at Grower Shipper Association**

**For More Information please
contact Darlene Din**

Statewide Truck/Bus Air Regulation- Reminder

NOTICE

For information regarding the
[STATEWIDE TRUCK AND BUS REGULATION](#),
click on the link above or call 1-866-6-DIESEL ([1-866-634-3735](tel:1-866-634-3735))
Agricultural Provisions Reporting Information (February 10,
2011)

- The [online reporting system](#) is now available for
agricultural fleets to report. Agricultural fleets that
reported in 2010 can login to the online system to
provide January 1, 2011 odometer readings and update

10..... [Waste Discharge Requirements for the
City of Monterey](#)..... Order No.
91-60

Monterey Bay Wharf Dredging
Operations, Monterey County

(Rescind Waste Discharge Requirements)
[Tom Kukol [805/549-3689](tel:8055493689)]

Administrative Items

11..... [Executive Officer's Report](#) [Roger Briggs [805/549-
3140](tel:8055493140)]..... Information/Discussion

Thursday March 17, 2011, 8:15 a.m.

12..... [Roll Call](#) [Roger Briggs [805/549-
3140](tel:8055493140)]..... Board Members
Present

13..... [Introductions](#) [Roger
Briggs].....
Guests and Staff Present

Waste Discharge Requirements

14..... [Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge
Requirements](#)..... Order No. R3-2011-
0006

for Discharges from Irrigated Lands

If there is no quorum, the Board may conduct this
item as a panel hearing of at least 3 board
members. Following the hearing, the panel will
make a recommendation for consideration by the
full Board at a later date. Note that this item is
subject to the prohibition on ex parte
communications; the public may not discuss this
matter with board members except at the hearing.

[Angela Schroeter [805/542-4644](tel:8055424644)]

vehicle information for 2011. Fleets that are reporting for the first time can create an account and enter their information directly online without using paper reporting forms. The [user guide](#) provides information on how to report and has the paper reporting forms.

- A [factsheet](#) is available that summarizes the agricultural vehicle provisions consistent with amendments considered by the Board at the December 17, 2010, Board Hearing.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Coast Region

Media Advisory

March 10, 2011

Contact: Dave Clegern

[\(916\) 327-8239](tel:(916)327-8239)

Public Meeting

What: Public meeting of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control

Board to consider an updated Irrigated Lands Order. **Board action**

is expected.

When: 8:15 a.m., Thursday, March 17, 2011.

Where: City Council Chambers, 275 Main Street, Watsonville.

THE BOARD AND STAFF WELCOME INFORMATION ON PERTINENT PROBLEMS, BUT COMMENTS AT THE MEETING SHOULD BE BRIEF AND DIRECTED TO SPECIFICS OF THE CASE TO ENABLE THE BOARD TO TAKE THE APPROPRIATE ACTION.

SPANISH LANGUAGE TRANSLATION WILL BE AVAILABLE.

WHENEVER POSSIBLE, LENGTHY TESTIMONY SHOULD BE PRESENTED TO THE BOARD IN WRITING AND ONLY A SUMMARY OF PERTINENT POINTS PRESENTED VERBALLY.

IN ORDER TO GIVE EVERYONE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD, COMMENTS SHOULD HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED IN WRITING AND A TIME LIMIT ON PRESENTATIONS MAY BE IMPOSED ON ANY AGENDA ITEM.

SPEAKERS SHOULD PLAN TO SUMMARIZE THEIR KEY POINTS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

THE CHAIR WILL ALLOCATE TIME TO INDIVIDUAL

SPEAKERS ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF SPEAKERS PRESENT. FOR SCHEDULING PURPOSES, REQUESTS FOR EXTENDED SPEAKING TIMES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO STAFF AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THE AGENDA IS MAILED. THE CHAIR WILL DECIDE WHETHER TO GRANT SUCH REQUESTS.

A COPY OF THE DRAFT TO BE CONSIDERED FOR ACTION BY THE BOARD CAN BE FOUND AT:
[HTTP://WWW.WATERBOARDS.CA.GOV/CENTRALCOAST/BOARD_INFO/AGENDAS/2011/MARCH/ITEM_14/INDEX.SHTML](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_info/agendas/2011/march/item_14/index.shtml)

THE ATTACHED FACT SHEET WILL ANSWER SOME BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DRAFT ORDER.

Central Coast Water Board Agricultural Order Facts:

Why are changes to the existing order necessary?

The 2004 Order requires watershed monitoring, but provides no way to address how growers should monitor and report compliance with the standards, nor does it tell them when they are expected to meet the standards.

Water quality pollution has persisted and worsened since adoption of the 2004 Order. The new draft Order requires:

- Monitoring of groundwater severely impacted by nitrate from agricultural waste discharges in the Central Coast Region.
- Reporting and monitoring that inform the Water Board and the public which growers have changed practices, or reduced pollutant loading.
- Timeframes for meeting water quality standards.

The 2004 Order is also inconsistent with California's Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Policy.

Why is another draft of this order needed?

The changes in this order are a direct response to issues and comments brought to the Regional Water Board and its staff at public workshops and stakeholder meetings around the region. Changes are in response to new water quality conditions and evidence presented. Changes are based on the need to make the order more effective and the terms of the order more manageable and understandable for growers.

How many growers will see major impact from the draft order?

Regional Water Board staff estimates 100 to 300 of the region's estimated 3,000 growers would face more than the most basic conditions in the draft order.

The remaining growers will be in Tier 1 and 2. They will be required to register (most already are), assemble and maintain a Farm Plan and do baseline monitoring for assessment purposes.

Baseline monitoring of groundwater will be required *only in the first year*.

What's the harm from agricultural pollution in the Central Coast Region?

Water quality problems from many irrigated agriculture operations are severe.

- High concentrations of nitrates can trigger a condition that robs the blood of oxygen. This is of special concern with pregnant women and infants since a baby's system is not developed enough to compensate for that lack of oxygen.
- Nitrates also feed algae and other life forms that choke off oxygen in water which is harmful to the aquatic food chain and fish.
- Of 700 municipal drinking water wells on the Central Coast, at least 200 exceed safe drinking water limits for nitrate and must be blended or treated to meet standards. More than 80% of the people of the Central Coast Region rely on groundwater for drinking.
- About 44,000 private wells are not monitored, but are generally drilled in shallow ground water more prone to higher nitrate concentrations than deeper municipal wells.
- Wastewater treatment plants and municipal storm runoff account for some nitrate, but in the region's heavy agricultural watersheds studies indicate as much as 87% of groundwater nitrate comes from fertilizer.

What is being damaged?

- In addition to drinking water supplies, riparian habitat is being altered or destroyed. This threatens wildlife, increases erosion and introduction of sediment, increases water temperature and decreases oxygen (bad for fish) and allows more chemicals to flow into the water.
- Aquatic organisms and fish in rivers, creeks and streams are being damaged by high levels of nitrate and pesticides. For example, in the lower Santa Maria Watershed, 15 out of 15 streams are polluted at levels deadly to insects that provide fish food. Those levels are also directly damaging to fish.

What is the cost to the region?

- This pollution creates a growing threat to public health, agriculture and the environment.
- Water companies pass on increased costs of treatment to their customers. Individual private well owners must pay for their own treatment or drink degraded and sometimes unhealthy water.
- The Regional Water Board estimates the cost of cleaning up just nitrate contamination in the region at hundreds of millions of dollars over the next few decades so it is important to

reduce contaminants at the source.

How were the numeric water quality standards in the draft order determined?

- The standards are mandated by State and Federal law.
- They are based on levels of chemical contamination that would make water harmful for drinking, swimming, wading, fishing, farming, industrial and other uses.

Why are the draft order's time lines necessary and how were they determined?

- Some of the time lines in the latest draft have been relaxed. The time lines provide benchmarks for monitoring compliance. They assure cleanup and compliance in a timely way. The State of California requires timelines in permits for pollution from agricultural runoff and other types of nonpoint source pollution.
- Regional Water Board staff considers the time required to establish effective monitoring in specific, local conditions. Staff also considers how long it should take to see measureable water quality improvement from the monitoring data. The Regional Water Board also considers the economic impact on growers who must install specialized equipment and work to minimize those impacts.

How much flexibility will growers have in meeting standards?

- The draft order does not specify how growers must meet water quality standards, only that they do so in a timely way. Growers have choices for how they reach compliance. Growers have the flexibility to try different practices or treatment methods on individual farms and ranches and also to use regional treatment facilities for multiple farms and ranches.
- Growers also have the option of using a third party for individual monitoring similar to the current use of a third party for watershed monitoring through the a cooperative to share the costs of monitoring and reporting. Growers have the option to use third parties or coalitions for reporting and implementation in addition to monitoring.
- Water Boards also provide some financial assistance, in certain cases, to help growers reach compliance.

Who must comply under the draft order?

- Discharges of waste from commercial irrigated ag operations that could percolate to groundwater or run off in tail water or storm water are discharges for purposes of this order.
- Waste discharges also include sediment that runs off a field

(erosion) due to land disturbances.

- The order does apply to irrigated turf raised for sale (sod). It does not apply to lawns, golf courses, individual potted plants, or water standing in roads and driveways.

On **March 17, 2011**, the Central Coast Water Board will hold a public meeting to consider staff's recommendations.

Agenda Item #14 - Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands

[Cover Sheet](#)

[Staff Report](#)

[Appendix A - Draft Agricultural Order](#)

[Appendix B - Draft Monitoring and Reporting Program](#)

[Appendix C - Draft Time Schedule for Compliance](#)

[Appendix D - Options Considered](#) [Distributed in Supplemental Sheet]

[Appendix E - Response to Comments](#) [Distributed in Supplemental Sheet]

[Appendix F - Cost Considerations](#)

[Appendix G - Report on Water Quality Conditions](#)

[Appendix H - Environmental Documents Pursuant to CEQA](#)

[Appendix I - Background](#)

[Appendix J - References](#)

[Supplemental Sheet](#)

Notice of Public Workshop

Development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for Nutrients and Nutrient-Related Impairments in the Lower Salinas River Watershed

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board will hold a workshop with stakeholders to provide a status update on development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for nutrients and nutrient-related water quality impairments for the Lower Salinas River Watershed.

Time and Location:

Date: April 4, 2011 (Monday)

Time: 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Address:

Monterey County Water Resources Agency (Board meeting room)
893 Blanco Circle, Salinas, CA 93901

Location map of Monterey County Water Resources Agency here:
<http://www.mcwra.co.monterey.ca.us/Images3/location-map.pdf>

Purpose

This workshop will provide participants with: (1) background on the Water Board's mandates under the Federal Clean Water Act and the State Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act; (2) background on sources of nutrient related impairments in surface waters of the watersheds (3) a status update on elements of the proposed TMDL project; (4) an opportunity for you to provide comment on the scope and nature of the proposed TMDLs.

For More Information

The Central Coast Water Board encourages interest and involvement in TMDL projects from stakeholders, interested parties, and the general public. Please refer to the Water Board's TMDL webpage at:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/tmdl

Who Should Attend

Individuals representing agricultural interests; landowners who own or operate agricultural operations; representatives of municipalities and other public agencies/entities, representatives of environmental groups, and other individuals interested in pollution reduction efforts in the lower Salinas River watershed.

Contact Information

If you have any questions, please contact Pete Osmolovsky at paosmolovsky@waterboards.ca.gov or at (805) 549-3699. Also, individuals requiring special accommodations are requested to contact Pete Osmolovsky at the aforementioned phone number or email address at least five working days prior to the meeting.

Agricultural exports and the economic recovery

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 10 March 2011

By Tom Vilsack
U.S. Agriculture Secretary

As the United States and global economies work to recover from the worst recession in decades,

American agriculture is helping to lead our nation's recovery by shattering trade records, creating jobs here at home and ensuring affordable food for U.S. families.

Thanks to one of the most productive eras in history for U.S. agriculture and a reputation for high quality products, farmers and ranchers are breaking records for sales of U.S. farm goods abroad and looking forward to some of the best net incomes in decades. U.S. Agriculture even has a trade surplus, expected to be worth \$47.5 billion this year.

Agricultural exports mean jobs for Americans here at home - every \$1 billion in farm exports supports roughly 8,000 jobs in the United States in agriculture and related industries. This year, exports will support over a million such jobs. And for the rest of the nation, the quality, affordable domestic food supply means that the average American spends less than ten percent of their paycheck on groceries - less than in many other developed nations.

In the years ahead, USDA will work harder than ever to give agricultural businesses even greater opportunities to grow. We want farmers to know that opportunities exist beyond our shores. Today, only 1 percent of U.S. companies export, and yet 95 percent of the world's consumers live outside the borders of the United States. We can do better to reach those consumers.

Smart trade deals that increase exports, support job creation, and bolster the American economy can help build for our future. Right now, the Obama administration is working to move forward on proposed U.S. trade agreements with South Korea, then Panama and Colombia - nations with 100 million consumers. Successful approval would bring billions of dollars to U.S. agriculture and immediate benefits by eliminating tariffs on a range of agricultural products.

Since 2009, when I became Agriculture Secretary, USDA officials have negotiated hard to open markets for U.S. farm goods. Thanks to the President's National Export Initiative, which challenged U.S. businesses to double all exports by the end of 2014, USDA is now reaching out to producers and agribusinesses, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises, with information about how to tackle the export market. Whether it means directly connecting U.S. companies and trade groups with foreign customers or advocating more forcefully for their interests with other governments, we are working to expand economic opportunities for Americans.

For decades, U.S. agriculture has helped to feed a hungry world, added jobs to our economy and reduced our trade deficit. As we work to strengthen the economy to win the future, don't be surprised that American farmers and ranchers are once again helping to lead the way.

Land trusts join forces to protect open space: Cemex's Davenport land, Pajaro Valley farmland eyed

By Paul Rogers - San Jose Mercury News

Posted: [03/10/2011](#)

Five area land trusts are working together (Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel)

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•[1](#)

•[»](#)

Hoping to preserve farmland, redwoods forests and coastal bluffs from development before real estate prices rebound, five land trusts today will announce a new \$15 million effort to join forces with a goal of protecting 10,000 acres in Santa Cruz County and other San Francisco Bay Area communities over the next three years.

The effort is funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation in Palo Alto. It will focus on open space conservation between the Mount Hamilton Range and South San Francisco, an area that includes most or all of Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Mateo and Alameda counties.

The foundation, established by Intel co-founder Gordon Moore, will require that its funds are matched on a 3-to-1 basis to extend the reach of the donation.

"We have a really rare calm before the storm," said Steve McCormick, president of the Moore Foundation. "With the significant falloff in the real estate market and falloff in prices there's an opportunity to act with some real strategic commitment rather than in a reactive way. Let's secure these places forever, because things will rebound, and prices will go up. We have a rare opportunity."

Under the project, known as the Living Landscape Initiative, five land trusts are collaborating to build detailed computer maps that highlight wildlife corridors for deer, elk, mountain lions and other species while focusing on areas most at risk for development, from the Pajaro Valley to San Mateo Coast to the East Bay Hills.

The groups plan to purchase land from willing sellers to be added to parks, but also intend to purchase development rights, particularly on farmland, leaving those properties in private ownership.

Last, best chance

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation provided \$500,000 to help organize the five land trusts, and fund extensive mapping and research to set priorities in four areas: the coast, the redwoods, the Pajaro River corridor and places that create wildlife corridors between existing parks.

The five land trusts involved are Save the Redwoods League, the Nature Conservancy, the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, the Peninsula Open Space Trust and the Sempervirens Fund.

"It's habitat, it's recreation, it's local food sources, it's protecting our food supply," said Dan Martin, board president of Sempervirens Fund, which buys redwood land in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

"It's a lot of things. The time is now. We aren't competing hand over fist with developers who are offering crazy prices. This may be our last, best chance to do conservation on a significant scale in this area."

Audrey Rust, president of the Peninsula Open Space Trust, pointed out two properties that could be preserved by the effort: the Sargent Ranch, a 6,000-acre expanse near Gilroy that has been in bankruptcy, and 8,000-plus acres owned by Cemex in Davenport where the recently close

cement plant operated for decades.

Of particular importance, Rust said, is creating connections between existing parks and open space preserves, not just for wildlife, but to link trails.

"We want these lands to function as a system," she said. "Not as individual parks, but as a system."

Attract new donors

The groups have set a larger goal of preserving 80,000 acres in the same Bay Area location over the next 20 years. That could cost anywhere from \$300 million to \$600 million. McCormick said one goal is to set audacious targets to help bring new private donors, particularly younger technology executives, to land conservation.

After a robust period from 1988 to 2008, where state voters passed more than \$10 billion in bonds for parks, open space and water projects, environmentalists have seen hard times. The California State Parks Department is expected within weeks to release a list closing dozens of parks because of California's historic budget deficit. In November, voters rejected Proposition 21, which would have added an \$18 surcharge to driver's license fees to fund parks. Meanwhile local parks and open space districts have seen their funding suffer as property tax revenues, which many of them depend upon, have decreased in the real estate downturn.

McCormick said it's likely the land trust will have to hold onto land longer, waiting for the economy to improve, before they sell or donate it to open space and parks agencies. At least one government open space agency in Silicon Valley said it welcomes the new private initiative.

"Acquisition dollars are harder to get in this economy. To see big foundations and the land trusts taking the leadership is the best possible thing," said Steve Abbors, general manager of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, which was created by voters in 1972 and has preserved 59,000 acres from Los Gatos to San Carlos.

Food for Thought: What is 'organic'?

Local can be defined as having been grown less than a day's drive from where it's purchased. By definition, organic produce has been grown without chemical fertilizers and pesticides while using sustainable agricultural practices.

[GateHouse News Service](#)

Posted Mar 08, 2011

Local" and "seasonal," like "fresh" and "organic," can mean a lot of different things, according to Jim Gallivan, department chair of Culinary Arts at The International Culinary School at The Art Institute of Atlanta and author of "The Adventure Cookbook."

To clear things up, Gallivan offers definitions for the terms:

* **Local.** Local can be defined as having been grown less than a day's drive from where it's purchased. Gallivan says local produce lasts longer, not having spent days traveling across the country or the world to get to you, which also means less resources are used and less air pollution is emitted.

* **Seasonal.** Today, you can get almost any kind of produce at just about any time of the year. Asparagus in December is shipped in from Peru, where it's in season. If food is not in season and it's not local, it won't have the great flavor you find in freshly picked produce.

* **Fresh.** If it's local and seasonal, fresh is usually better. But sometimes canned or frozen is a better choice, especially if you're cooking vegetables or fruit, as opposed to serving them raw. For instance, tomatoes are out of season in the winter, so it is better to use canned. Gallivan says canned and frozen produce has typically been picked and processed at its peak.

* **Organic.** By definition, organic produce has been grown without chemical fertilizers and pesticides while using sustainable agricultural practices. "Natural" is not the same as "organic." Neither is "additive free" or "no preservatives." Moreover, there are different levels of United States Department of Agriculture Organic Certification. So when you shop for organic produce, be aware and read the fine print.

To learn more about USDA Organic Certification, visit www.ams.usda.gov

Outlawing dust bowls

March 7, 2011

Chicago Tribune

[Editorials](#)

Take a deep breath: After years of argument and litigation, the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) is poised to regulate farm dust.

Yes, farm dust. That is, ordinary dust produced through ordinary farming operations.

Ever heard that old saying, "Plant in the dust and your bins will bust?" Pretty soon anyone who plants in the dust could be busted for it.

The EPA's farm-dust initiative has roots stretching back to 1987, when the agency cracked down on soot and other small particles in the air.

As the agency revised those rules in 2006, farmers recognized that farm dust might be swept up under the same standards applied to the traffic and industry of dense urban areas. Their advocates sued, saying the EPA should distinguish between particles concentrated in crowded cities, where protection is needed, and "nonurban" particles

that pose no proven threat. But clean-air advocates prevailed, in a ruling that cleared the way for the EPA to step in even if the impact on human health is "inconclusive."

Although the agency hasn't issued a new proposal yet, farm-state lawmakers from both parties have been bracing for something disruptive and impractical. Even if it were possible to pave all the dirt roads in all the rural byways coast to coast, how are corn-and-soybean farmers supposed to harvest their crop dust-free? And are ranchers supposed to walk their feedlots with pooper scoopers to dispose of manure before their cattle kick it up?

Banning farm dust because it might cause a respiratory hazard is like asking farmers to mop up the morning dew because the droplets might be contaminated.

Unfortunately, few expect the EPA to deal with this matter in a reasonable manner - and that's too bad, because agriculture needs sensible regulation to reduce bona-fide threats to public health.

Farming lacks the federal safety rules and inspection regimens that have reduced the death toll in mining, construction and other dangerous industries over the years. Fatalism, self-reliance and economic pressure make farmers especially resistant to even the most practical life-saving measures, such as requiring rollover protection on older tractors still in use. The prospect of government control threatens deeply held values, so farmers take their chances with machinery entanglements, livestock assaults and other rural risks that safety advocates have struggled for decades to systematically reduce.

What a shame if the EPA, as many lawmakers expect, unveils the sort of regulation that gives regulation a bad name.

Dust is a fact of life on farms, and the agency must distinguish between legitimate, controllable hazards and the inevitable byproduct of working with dirt.

Patriotism and crop subsidies

How 'ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm?

Mar 8th 2011, *The Economist* by W.W. | IOWA CITY

IN THIS [chat with Ezra Klein](#), Tom Vilsack, the secretary of agriculture, offers a pandering defence of agricultural subsidies so thoroughly bereft of substance I began to fear that Mr Vilsack would be sucked into the vacuum of his mouth and disappear. When Mr Klein first raises the subject of subsidies for sugar and corn, Mr Vilsack admirably says, "I admit and acknowledge that over a period of time, those subsidies need to be phased out." But not yet! Vilsack immediately thereafter scrambles to defend the injurious practice. Ethanol subsidies help to wean us off foreign fuels and dampen price volatility when there is no peace in the Middle East, Mr Vilsack contends. Anyway, he continues, undoing the economic dislocation created by decades of corporate welfare for the likes of ADM and Cargill will create economic dislocation. Neither of these points is entirely lacking in merit, but they at best argue for phasing out subsidies slowly starting *now*. Mr Vilsack should have stopped here, since this is as strong as his case is ever going to be, but instead he goes on to argue that these subsidies sustain rural culture, which is a patriotic culture that honours and encourages vital military service: [S]mall-town folks in rural America don't feel appreciated. They feel they do a great service for America. They send their children to the military not just because it's an opportunity, but because they have a value system from the farm: They have to give something back to the land that sustains them.



Mr Klein follows up sanely:

It sounds to me like the policy you're suggesting here is to subsidize the military by subsidizing rural America. Why not just increase military pay? Do you believe that if there was a substantial shift in geography over the next 15 years, that we wouldn't be able to furnish a military?

To which Mr Vilsack says:

I think we would have fewer people. There's a value system there. Service is important for rural folks. Country is important, patriotism is important. And people grow up with that. I wish I could give you all the examples over the last two years as secretary of agriculture, where I hear people in rural America constantly being criticized, without any expression of appreciation for what they do do.

In the end, Mr Vilsack's argument comes down to the notion that the people of rural America feel that they have lost social status, and that subsidies amount to a form of just compensation for this injury. I don't think Mr Vilsack really believes that in the absence of welfare for farmers, the armed services would be hard-pressed to find young men and women willing to make war for the American state. He's using willingness-to-volunteer as proof of superior patriotism, and superior patriotism is the one claim to status left to those who have no other. As Julian Sanchez put it in [this insightful post](#):

[A] lot of our current politics has less to do with actual policy disagreements than with resolving status anxieties. You can think of patriotism as a kind of status socialism—a collectivization of the means of self-esteem production. You don't have to graduate from an Ivy or make a lot of money to feel proud or special about being an American; you don't have to do a damn thing but be born here. Cultural valorization of "American-ness" relative to other status

markers, then, is a kind of redistribution of psychological capital to those who lack other sources of it.

Mr Vilsack's retreat to the patriotism of rural Americans as justification for continued subsidies—subsidies that mostly enrich huge corporations—I think vindicates Mr Sanchez's claim that politics is largely a matter of creating and catering to status anxieties, while also demonstrating that the case for agricultural subsidies has hit rock bottom. Unfortunately, winning the intellectual debate over agricultural subsidies is far from sufficient to motivate politicians to begin opposing them in earnest. The combination of rural status anxiety and the lobbying heft of the agribusiness giants should be enough to keep laying the hurt on the world's poor farmers and grain consumers for a long time to come.

Scientists plan to shoot barred owls to save related rivals

Federal study might benefit birds that loggers blame for timber decline

- By [Dylan Darling](#)
- Record Searchlight
- Posted March 5, 2011

Federal scientists literally have barred owls in their sights.

They're hoping that blasting the birds will save their weaker cousins, the controversial spotted owls some blame for destroying the Western timber industry.

The scientists want to study whether "lethal removal" of barred owls, which will be killed by shotgun-toting biologists, will induce a revival of the northern spotted owl population, said Robin Bown, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist in Portland, Ore.

The hunting trips will take biologists through the forests of the north state, Oregon and Washington.

First discussed in a draft recovery plan for spotted owls in 2007, the experiment should be detailed in a draft environmental document to be released in the next couple of months.

"The question remains: Would removing barred owls improve spotted owl population?" Bown said.

Spotted owls often are blamed for collapsing the West's timber industry. Despite almost two decades of increased protection, which led to decreased logging, the spotted owl populations remain fragile.

Now the more aggressive barred owls are pushing the spotted owls from their perches. Scientists fear if they're left unchecked, the East Coast native barred owls could snuff out their spotted cousins.

Before 1900, barred owls were found only east of the Mississippi River and south of Canada, Bown said. Since 1900, the owls have spread into Canada, Washington, Oregon and California, including the north state.

It's unclear what triggered the territory expansion. It likely was spurred by people planting more

trees across the Great Plains, Bown said. The trees created refuges for the owls as they moved west. The owls first spread to California in the 1970s.

In the West, barred owls are taking over spotted owl habitat, out-competing and even attacking the other owls.

"Barred owls are more intense hunters," Bown said.

While spotted owls are finicky, specialist hunters focused on dusky footed woodrats and flying squirrels, barred owls see the forest as their smorgasbord. Barred owls will eat crawfish, salamanders, slugs and worms, as well as rodents, Bown said.

Their less exclusive menu is helping the barred owls thrive while the spotted owls struggle.

That's where the shotguns come in.

Although scientists hope killing the barred owls will help spotted owls rebound, the study also will include less dramatic measures, including the use of nets to capture barred owls. The problem with capturing the owls, Bown said, is someone needs to care for them and there are few places interested in taking in the owls.

She said she doesn't know how many owls will be killed for the study.

Fish and Wildlife doesn't have estimates of how many barred and spotted owls are in the woods, she said. Developing population estimates will be part of the study.

Critics of the plan say it's cruel to shoot barred owls, but it's receiving support from some potentially surprising sources.

"We want to see at the very least the experiment," said Scott Greacen, executive director of the Environmental Protection Information Center.

The Arcata-based group often is embroiled in lawsuits to protect species. Greacen said shooting barred owls could prove to be the best way to help spotted owls.

"This is an invading species in this situation," he said.

He said although people didn't directly move the owls to the West, they did contribute to their spread. Shooting the barred owls could restore the natural order, he said.

"It's a way of actually being responsible for our actions," Greacen said.

<http://www.redding.com/news/2011/mar/05/scientists-plan-to-shoot-owls-to-save-related/>

Food Policy & Law- Marler Clark- Food Safety News

More Discussion of E. coli Testing in Beef

by [News Desk](#) | Mar 08, 2011

One week after U.S. Department of Agriculture Inspector General Phyllis Fong called for better E. coli O157:H7 testing procedures, the Beef Industry Food Safety Council unveiled new, voluntary [guidelines](#) for testing products such as beef "trim," the leftover pieces from larger cuts used to make ground beef.

As first reported in [Meatingplace](#), the new guidance document for the industry was funded in part by the Beef Checkoff Program and provides suggested procedures for sampling and testing trim, intact meat cuts and frozen ground beef, as well as how to improve lotting protocol and analysis of lab test results.

USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety Elisabeth Hagen called the recommendations "an important step forward in our collective efforts to ensure consistent results in the industry's food safety programs."

According to Meatinplace, while the guidelines are voluntary, they simplify the process for companies that are revising their current sampling programs or creating new ones. They also identify the expectations and issues that should be considered when developing a program for pathogen testing.

Last week, [in testimony](#) before the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, Fong told lawmakers her office completed an audit to assess the Food Safety and Inspection Service's sampling program for beef trim and determined the current method "does not yield a statistical precision that is reasonable for food safety."

Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro, D-CT, ranking member on the Labor, Health, and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee, on Monday responded to the Inspector General's report, which she said she had requested in November, 2009.

DeLauro, in a news release, said she was disturbed that the sampling program developed by FSIS is not statically valid, adding, "Even more troubling is that, based on the report's findings, this sampling method is not able to verify that plant controls or interventions are working as intended."

She urged USDA to come up with statistically valid sampling and corresponding cost estimates for a revised program and laboratory costs.

Eco-farming could double food output of poor countries, says UN

Report cites insect-trapping plants in Kenya and Bangladesh's use of ducks in paddy fields, and resulting rise in crop yields

- Reuters
- guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 8 March 2011



Some rice paddy farmers have started using ducks for weeding instead of industrial methods. Photograph: Anupam Nath/AP

A move by farmers in developing countries to ecological agriculture, away from chemical fertilisers and [pesticides](#), could double food production within a decade, [a UN report says](#).

Insect-trapping plants in Kenya and ducks eating weeds in Bangladesh's rice paddies are among examples of recommendations for feeding the world's 7 billion people, which the UN says will become about 9 billion by 2050. "Agriculture is at a crossroads," says the study by Olivier de Schutter, the UN special reporter on the right to food, in a drive to depress record food prices and avoid the costly [oil](#)-dependent model of industrial [farming](#).

So far, eco-farming projects in 57 nations demonstrated average crop yield gains of 80 per cent by tapping natural methods for enhancing soil and protecting against pests, it says.

Recent projects in 20 African countries resulted in a doubling of crop yields within three to 10 years. Those lessons could be widely mimicked elsewhere, it adds.

"Sound ecological farming can significantly boost production and in the long term be more effective than conventional farming," De Schutter said of steps such as more use of natural compost or high-canopy trees to shade coffee groves.

It is also believed "agroecology" could make farms more resilient to extreme weather conditions associated with climate change, including floods, droughts and a rise in sea levels that the report said was already making fresh [water](#) near some coasts too salty for use in irrigation.

Benefits would be greatest in "regions where too few efforts have been put in to agriculture, particularly sub-Saharan Africa," he said. "There are also a number of very promising experiences in parts of Latin America and parts of Asia.

"The cost of food production has been very closely following the cost of oil," he said. Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia [have been partly linked to discontent at soaring food prices](#). Oil prices were around \$115 a barrel on Tuesday.

"If food prices are not kept under control and populations are unable to feed themselves ... we will increasingly have states being disrupted and failed states developing," De Schutter said.

Examples of successful agroecology in Africa include the thousands of Kenyan farmers who planted insect-repelling desmodium or tick clover, used as animal fodder, within corn fields to keep damaging insects away and sowed small plots of napier grass nearby that excretes a sticky gum to trap pests.

The study also called for better research, training and use of local knowledge. "Farmer field schools" by rice growers in Indonesia, Vietnam and Bangladesh had led to cuts in insecticide use by between 35 and 92 percent, it said.

De Schutter also recommended a diversification in global farm output, from reliance on rice, wheat and maize.

Developed nations, however, would be unable to make a quick shift to agroecology because of what he called an "addiction" to an industrial, oil-based model of farming - but a global long-term effort to shift to agroecology was needed.

It cited Cuba as an example of how change was possible, as the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to supplies of cheap pesticides and fertilisers being cut off. Yields had risen after a downturn in the 1990s as farmers adopted more eco-friendly methods.

The Midas Touch, The Midas Effect

Monterey County Weekly: The Midas Touch, The Midas Effect

<http://www.montereycountyweekly.com/news/2011/mar/10/midas-touch-midas-effect/>

The controversial fumigant methyl iodide may soon be applied to local fields, despite dire warnings from some of the best scientific minds in the country.

By Sara Rubin, David Schmalz

March 10, 2011

If politics make for great live theater, then a Feb. 22 hearing held in Sacramento about the controversial strawberry fumigant methyl iodide might have been scripted by Franz Kafka. And much like a Kafka tale, there are stories behind stories.

The characters include a state pesticide department that ignored its own scientists' warnings; the department's hired expert and his band of scientific brothers whom methyl iodide's manufacturer claims went rogue and exceeded the scope of their established mission; a produce industry worth billions of dollars to the state economy; and the private-equity backed maker of the product they call MIDAS, whose company tagline reads "Bold, Agile and Customer Driven."

More specifically, the characters are:

The state Department of Pesticide Regulation (headed by former California Farm Bureau Federation executive Mary-Ann Warmerdam), which last December approved methyl iodide's registration in California, paving the way for pesticide applicators to seek permits to fumigate strawberry fields with the substance.

DPR hired gun, scientist John Froines, a bona fide member of the Chicago Seven turned Yale chemistry Ph.D. Now a professor of environmental health at UCLA, Froines was paid by the DPR to lead a scientific review of methyl iodide. During the Sacramento hearing, his simple statements - "Science was subverted" in the approval process and "there is no safe level of release" when it comes to the fumigant - had jaws dropping.

The California Strawberry Commission, whose public policy director Rick Tomlinson says it's fumigation, subsidies or die: He catalogued the non-fumigant alternatives - including breeding for pest resistance, steam treating the soil, manure and even soil-less farming (using peat) - along with reasons none of these alternatives would work.

There were the off-stage characters, Lori Lim and Ruby Reed - two scientists from the DPR who said the use of methyl iodide poses significant health risks to the public and who quit the department after methyl iodide was approved. Reed could not be located for comment and Lim, now at the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, told the Weekly through an intermediary she would not talk about methyl iodide.

In the background, watching the hearing either in the chamber or on a live feed, were the folks from Arysta LifeSciences North America, the North Carolina-based maker of MIDAS. They don't want to talk about the money, they won't say where the product is manufactured, and the route on which it will be shipped, by rail, is secret too. By their account, John Froines went rogue, exceeded the scope of his authority and just thinks he's smarter than those jurisdictions that say MIDAS is perfectly safe.

And Arysta officials say in just a few short months, starting in about May, pesticide companies will begin seeking the first permits in California for those growers who want to apply MIDAS to their fields.

The Monterey County Agricultural Commission has not yet received permit requests for MIDAS, perhaps because growers are clinging to methyl bromide, or because soil bed preparation season doesn't begin for a few months - or because it will take years until growers are willing to make the investment. But when the time comes, "We're certainly ready to consider any applications for permits that we receive," says Assistant Agricultural Commissioner Bob Roach.

"[THE EPA HAS] NO DATA ON HOW THIS CHEMICAL WOULD DAMAGE A DEVELOPING FETUS. THEY HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO CALL IN THIS DATA, BUT THEY DIDN'T."

Here is the story of how the state of California came to approve the registration of MIDAS and brought us closer to the start of a strawberry season that could see

pesticide companies applying it to the profitable growing fields of Monterey and Santa Cruz counties - despite the fact that some researchers use methyl iodide in their labs for the sole purpose of inducing cancer in mice.

Strawberries are considered a "high value" crop - expensive to put in the ground, but potentially lucrative if the season goes right. A source familiar with the strawberry industry says a good grower - think the well-known Driscoll or the more secretive, closely held Well-Pict - can produce about 7,000 boxes an acre, and profit anywhere from 50 cents to \$1 per box.

Strawberries in California are a \$2.1 billion industry, and growers in the Salinas and Watsonville areas produced 41 percent of the state's strawberries in 2010.

Growers long have relied on the fumigant methyl bromide as a "preplant" soil fumigant, and as a quarantine and pre-shipment fumigant to prevent the export of native pests. It's also being phased out as a result of the international treaty known as the Montreal Protocol because it depletes the ozone layer. That set the industry in search of alternatives.

That's where methyl iodide comes in.

UC Riverside plant pathology professor Jim Sims researched the potential use of methyl iodide as a fumigant for 20 years, and eventually patented the manufacturing process. The UC Regents own the patent, UC Riverside manages it and licensed it to Arysta.

The company won't say how much it pays for the patent, other than to describe it as "an annual fee." Arysta's business development manager Jeff Tweedy says the company has spent about \$20 million getting MIDAS registered in various places, including California and Florida.

Methyl iodide's scientific origins come with no small amount of irony because, amid the controversy as to whether it is safe for use, one community stands in almost unanimous opposition: scientists - including those like Froines who have been asked to investigate it.

Methyl iodide is a compound known as an alkylating agent, which means that it is damaging to DNA, the effect of which can lead to cancer as well as harm the development of a human fetus, among other things.

When the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved it in 2007 for use as an agricultural fumigant, response among scientists was rapid.

Robert Bergman, the Gerald E.K. Branch distinguished professor of chemistry at UC Berkeley, drafted a letter with his friend, the Nobel laureate Roald Hoffmann, a chemistry professor at Cornell University in New York.

The scientists outlined the potential dangers of methyl iodide to farmworkers and the general community, and asked the EPA to reconsider its approval. In a

matter of days, Bergman garnered signatures from 52 more scientists, four of whom are Nobel laureates; the letter is now known as "The Letter of 54."

"When I heard that it was going to be used as a pesticide, that large amounts were going to be put into the environment, I had to do something," Bergman says.

The EPA did not rescind the approval, and scientists have since been in the department's face in a fight where, while the facts seem to be on their side, reality exists in an alternate universe. According to Arysta's Tweedy, when The Letter of 54 was first sent to the EPA, the EPA immediately asked each scientist to prove that methyl iodide was as dangerous as the scientists were claiming.

There was no proof forthcoming, Tweedy says.

The EPA's letter to Bergman, though, tells a different story. In short, rather than asking for proof of its danger, the EPA responded with a long justification about why it was OK to use methyl iodide.

"No one, including the EPA and Arysta, have ever claimed that the material is not a poison; they just claim that their stringent procedures will keep it from poisoning people," Bergman says. "Big difference."

The thought that methyl iodide can be used is in some ways built on a narrative, a tale that assumes there will be no accidental releases, ever, and that a single day of training for pesticide applicators will be enough to ensure their safety.

In this tale, the tarps that are supposed to remain on the ground treated with MIDAS for two weeks after fumigation will never rip. No strong winds will ever come along and blow those tarps away. None of the chemical off-gassing from the ground will ever be blown in a single direction - toward, say, a neighborhood or busy road.

Susan Kegley, CEO of the Pesticide Research Institute and consulting scientist for the Pesticide Action Network North America, or PANNA, says the EPA tests assumed methyl iodide off-gasses equally in all directions. "Their science was not given any support from the scientific review committee," Kegley says. "[The committee] basically shredded everything they had done."

SOME RESEARCHERS USE METHYL IODIDE IN THEIR LABS FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF INDUCING CANCER IN MICE.

And though numerous lab studies have shown that methyl iodide exposure kills fetuses in rabbits, the EPA's study, according to Ted Schettler, a toxicologist and co-author of several books, including Generations at

Risk: Reproductive Health and the Environment, focuses mainly on methyl iodide's

effect on the thyroid, given the well-known role that iodine plays in thyroid function. "There are at least four other mechanisms by which methyl iodide can damage a baby's brain other than its effect on the thyroid, and they haven't been studied," Schettler says.

"It's a real deficiency in the data set. [The EPA has] no data on how this chemical would damage a developing fetus. They have the authority to call in this data, but they didn't."

Representatives from the EPA responded to questions from the Weekly that their review was "rigorous," and amounted to "one of the most thorough analyses ever completed by the EPA for a pesticide registration."

What is known about methyl iodide is daunting: It is approximately four times more neurotoxic than methyl bromide, it is a known carcinogen and it's on the California Prop. 65 list of developmental toxicants. It has been shown to cause developmental toxicity at doses eight times lower than methyl bromide.

How exactly methyl iodide could affect farmworkers and surrounding communities may, however, be hard to pin down.

"There are a lot of possibilities in between a dead fetus and a healthy one," Kegley says. She also notes some of the potential damage might not be visible, like lowered IQs. The first and most noticeable effect that would probably be seen locally, she adds, would be a spike in thyroid disease.

Kathleen Collins, a UC Berkeley molecular biologist who spoke about methyl iodide in front of the California state legislature in 2009, says disposing of methyl iodide in her lab would cost her thousands of dollars. At Cal, methyl iodide is classified as a "zero-release,"

Class C compound, which means that no amount is allowed to go down the drain. "This is in contrast to hundreds of other chemicals we can dilute. People near farms will have to be near it, but I have to pay to dispose of it."

Even if drift can be minimized, groundwater contamination is also a major concern with methyl iodide usage, and though state regulators insist protective measures will be extensive, scientists are skeptical.

"There's no way to protect groundwater except not to use it,"

Kegley says.

Growers aren't scrambling to embrace methyl iodide, either. Despite Arysta's claim that MIDAS is the "next-generation soil fumigant,"

and claims from the Strawberry Commission that strawberries will have to be subsidized, a la corn, if they can't use MIDAS, some say it won't be the silver bullet methyl bromide was. It also may carry a cost-prohibitive price tag.

Miguel Ramos has been farming strawberries in Watsonville for nearly 30 years, and doing pretty well at it. According to Arysta, who directed the Weekly to Ramos as a grower who has tested MIDAS on a small number of acres during the product's research phase, Ramos produces about 35 tons of strawberries per season on his 40 acres.

But Ramos says that after the effects of the last application of methyl bromide to his fields wear off in four to five years, he will seriously consider retiring early. When it comes to using methyl iodide, the state has imposed too many restrictions. "Where I farm I cannot use methyl iodide," he says. "They have buffer zones of one-quarter mile to sensitive sites, and I'm surrounded by sensitive sites." It leaves him with the same question he had when he heard methyl bromide was being taken off the market: "How am I going to be able to farm?"

Strawberries aren't the only problem, though. Many strawberry growers rotate their crops with lettuce and broccoli growers. Without methyl bromide, not only strawberries will suffer. "You're talking about the ability to farm our area," says Edward Ortega, former president of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau and a long-time strawberry grower in the Pajaro Valley.

And then there's the cost.

The projections for the material cost of methyl iodide are approximate, as Arysta does not publish a price list, and would not release pricing information to the Weekly. Arysta's Tweedy, when asked about a rumored per acre cost of about \$2,500 to \$3,000, nods. "That's a reasonable number," he says.

Trical, Hollister-based pesticide applicators that cover most of the region, also would not share specific numbers, but speculate MIDAS will be competitive with methyl bromide. The question, though: Is that the price of methyl bromide before the ban, or current, post-ban prices when supplies began to dwindle and costs shot up?

Dr. Steven Fennimore, a Salinas-based extension specialist with UC Davis says, "I don't expect to have widespread use [of methyl iodide] at all, simply because of the resistance and the high cost."

While it's too early to predict exactly how the per-acre expense compares, Fennimore and his colleagues have preliminary calculations that applying MIDAS will cost up to a whopping \$4,800 per acre, compared to the already high-end methyl bromide at \$3,000 to \$3,500 per acre - the price applicators began charging in recent years as supplies dipped and the sunset on bromide's use neared.

Without methyl bromide, and only ineffective or high-cost alternatives to date, farmers are bracing for the worst. "Growers are scared to death," Fennimore says.

Even as MIDAS has been registered in Florida since 2008, some question the

product's effectiveness. In test plots, University of Florida nematologist Joe Noling has observed poor performance. "It didn't really do a very good job against a number of different weed pests, and even nematode pests," he says.

Noling says Arysta has been doling out MIDAS for well below market value, "just to get growers to trial it." Still, "MIDAS is a cost that I don't know that they can afford or have even trialled to any extent. I'm willing to bet that there aren't 10 acres in Florida that are treated with MIDAS."

Growers, though, aren't the only ones scared to death. It's a given that pesticides are dangerous, even according to DPR: "Because they are intended to control a wide range of pests, fumigants are highly toxic."

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board also weighed in against registering methyl iodide, citing fears of drinking water contamination. For the same reasons methyl iodide is an ozone-friendly substitute for methyl bromide - it doesn't gas off, or volatize, as readily - its residence time in soil is expected to be about five times higher. The water board, citing DPR's own studies, predicts "groundwater contamination by the iodide metabolite in susceptible soils that might contribute to drinking water exposure," in a 2010 letter submitted to DPR.

At the hearing last month before the California Assembly Committees on Health and Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials, Tom Howard, the executive director of the state Water Resources Control Board, said yet-unpublished findings in Florida would reveal whether methyl iodide is indeed a groundwater contaminant. "I'm told that they did find iodide in shallow groundwater," he said.

Froines, the lead scientist commissioned by DPR to review its risk assessment, states firmly that there is no safe level for methyl iodide.

Testifying at the Feb. 22 hearing, Froines told lawmakers, "There is no question that methyl iodide is profoundly toxic."

Froines chaired the eight-person scientific committee that peer reviewed DPR staff's risk assessment. Though not required by law, DPR "chose to conduct a risk assessment because numerous animal studies showed it posed a potential risk to public health," says Lea Brooks, DPR spokesperson. DPR then contracted with Froines for "an independent, objective peer review to affirm the high quality of science used in the risk assessment."

And Froines thinks highly of the quality of that science. In a 2010 letter to the agency, he wrote, "DPR has taken a highly appropriate public health protective approach throughout this assessment."

"WE DON'T COME TO THE BAT [AGAINST] OF EVERY PESTICIDE. WE'RE INVOLVED IN THIS ONE BECAUSE SCIENTISTS ARE SAYING THIS IS ONE OF MOST TOXIC CHEMICALS ON EARTH."

Ruby Reed and Lori Lim, the DPR scientists who wrote the agency's 203-page risk assessment and subsequently quit their jobs, presented their findings in

September 2009. They concluded their PowerPoint presentation advising, "Proposed use of [methyl iodide] in field fumigation results in significant health risks for workers and the general population."

Their science, Froines maintains, was of a high caliber, but when DPR issued its rules, "Our scientific input was largely ignored."

Based on the scientific review committee and DPR's findings, the highest recommended safe exposure to methyl iodide is .30 parts per billion for neighboring residents. But DPR, in writing the label and setting buffers and maximum concentrations that can be applied to fields, exceeded that exposure recommendation a hundredfold, using 32 ppb. (This is still five times less than EPA's allowable exposure of 150 ppb.)

After reviewing a risk assessment, DPR crafted a risk management plan to mitigate negative environmental and health effects. In the case of methyl iodide, Froines says assuming mitigation factors like tarps, protective gear and buffer zones will protect public health "is fanciful and even ludicrous."

Froines did not respond to repeated requests for an interview. But Scientific Review Committee member Dr. Paul Blanc, chief of the division of occupational and environmental medicine at UC San Francisco, says there's no way the committee overstepped its bounds.

"During our deliberations, there was no sense from the DPR that they were anything but wholly satisfied with our diligence and approach,"

Blanc says.

"There did not seem to be any substantive gap in the views and recommendations of the SRC and the scientific staff of the DPR. It was only after the fact that administrators within DPR decided to alter our risk estimates."

According to Brooks, routine procedure was followed when it came to accepting the SRC's input: "Peer reviewers were asked only to review scientific and technical matters, leaving policy determinations for DPR.

There is never an obligation or even expectation that, as a result of a peer review, all recommended changes will be made."

The model DPR decided to apply, says Blanc, is "essentially playing Russian roulette with the children of California when it comes to methyl iodide."

Sentiments about methyl iodide are so strong that Kathryn Gilje, PANNA director, has made the fight against the chemical one of the primary focuses of the organization.

"We don't come to the bat [against] every pesticide," she says.

"There's more than a thousand of them. We're involved in this one because

scientists, many of whom are Nobel laureates, are saying this is one of most toxic chemicals on earth."

The story seems to be entering its third act - and pending litigation could provide an alternate ending. California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. and Earthjustice filed suit against DPR on the grounds that registering methyl iodide violates the California Environmental Quality Act, California Birth Defects Prevention Act, and Pesticide Contamination Prevention Act. The suit, filed Dec. 30, 2010, also contends that DPR violated the law requiring involvement of the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment in developing farmworker safety regulations and made an unlawful finding of emergency with its request for Restricted Materials status for methyl iodide.

But if the story continues as Arysta expects, and pesticide applicators begin seeking permits to apply methyl iodide in California within the next few months, Collins, the UC Berkeley molecular biologist, suggests a most succinct ending.

Growing power

Debunking the stubborn myth that only industrial ag can 'feed the world'

GRIST by [Tom Philpott](#)

March 10 2011

I've [written about it once already](#), but I want to return to *The Economist's* [recent special series](#) about how industrial agriculture is the true and only way to feed the 9 billion people who will inhabit the world by 2050. The framing, I think, is extremely interesting.

The widely revered magazine identifies two strains of thought on the food system's future: one serious and one frivolous.

The serious one -- made up of "food companies, plant breeders, and international development agencies" -- is "concerned mainly with feeding the world's growing population," which it plans to do "through the spread of modern farming, plant research and food processing in poor countries."

The frivolous one -- "influential among non-governmental organizations and some consumers" -- "concentrates more on the food problems of richer countries, such as concerns about animal welfare and obesity," *The Economist* writes. This group fixates on the question of "what should we have for dinner," but has little to say about feeding the globe's growing population. And since *The Economist's* special report "concentrates on the problems of feeding the 9 billion," not the trivial omnivorous dilemmas of wealthy Berkeleyites, the magazine throws its lot in with the companies, plant breeders, and international development agencies -- the Serious People Looking for Real Solutions for Feeding the World.

I'm focusing on this *Economist* spread because I think it beautifully exemplifies (and reinforces) the conventional wisdom on the future of food.

President Obama displayed his fealty to it by [placing an agrichemical-industry lobbyist in charge of agricultural trade negotiations](#) and by [tapping a Monsanto-funded scientist to lead the USDA's research program](#).

USDA chief Tom Vilsack expresses it when he [natters on about ramming open foreign markets to our surplus farm](#)

[products.](#)

Nina Fedoroff, until recently the State Department's chief science advisor, promotes it [every chance she gets](#). She has moved on from shaping U.S. foreign policy on ag science to another influential position: president of the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#).

The globe's best-endowed grantmaker, the Gates Foundation, endorses it every time it [cuts a deal](#) with agribusiness giants like Monsanto and BASF.

The problem is, the conventional wisdom is wrong -- or, at the very least, much more contested than its champions let on. *The Economist* insisted that international development agencies had embraced Big Ag as the solution to the globe's food problem, but that simply isn't true.

Indeed, for years now, a steady stream of reports has emerged from the development agencies calling for new directions. In 2008, the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development and the U.N. Environment Program issued a [paper](#) [PDF] called "Organic Agriculture and Food Security in Africa." It reads like a direct refutation of *The Economist's* claims. The report concludes:

Organic agriculture can increase agricultural productivity and can raise incomes with low-cost, locally available and appropriate technologies, without causing environmental damage. Furthermore, evidence shows that organic agriculture can build up natural resources, strengthen communities and improve human capacity, thus improving food security by addressing many different causal factors simultaneously ... Organic and near-organic agricultural methods and technologies are ideally suited for many poor, marginalized smallholder farmers in Africa, as they require minimal or no external inputs, use locally and naturally available materials to produce high-quality products, and encourage a whole systemic approach to farming that is more diverse and resistant to stress.

That same year, the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) issued a [report](#) [PDF] that echoed those conclusions. Entitled "Mitigating Climate Change, Providing Food Security and Self-Reliance for Rural Livelihoods," the report points to the [Tigray area of Ethiopia](#), "previously known as one of the most degraded Regions of Ethiopia." There, more than 20,000 farming families saw yields of major cereals and pulses nearly double "using ecological agricultural practices such as composting, water and soil conservation activities, agroforestry, and crop diversification" -- even as "the use of chemical fertilizers ... steadily decreased." The phaseout of synthetic and mined fertilizers was key, because "most poor farmers, particularly in degraded lands and in market-marginalized areas, are not able to afford external inputs," the report states.

Perhaps even more crucially, the FAO researchers found that "ecological agriculture" could "assist farmers in adapting to climate change" by making farm fields more resilient to stress. So why isn't eco-agriculture catching on? The report cites a bevy of obstacles, none of them technological:

[L]ack of policy support at local, national, regional and international levels, resource and capacity constraints, and a lack of awareness and inadequate information, training and research on ecological agriculture at all levels.

At a [conference in 2009](#), the FAO once again bluntly contradicted the conventional wisdom. "In the name of intensification in many places around the world, farmers over-ploughed, over-fertilized, over-irrigated, over-applied pesticides," Shivaji Pandey, director of FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division, declared. "But in so doing we also affected all aspects of the soil, water, land, biodiversity and the services provided by an intact ecosystem. That began to bring yield growth rates down."

In place of industrial methods, Pandey called for "conservation agriculture," which he described as a "farming system that does not use regular ploughing and tillage but promotes permanent soil cover and diversified crop rotation to ensure optimal soil health and productivity."

Then there's the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). Under the auspices of the United Nations, World Bank, World Health Organization, and other institutions, the IAASTD gathered 400 scientists and development experts from dozens of nations to assess the very problems examined by *The Economist*. A three-year project, it has been called the [IPCC](#) of agriculture.

Its [conclusion](#) [PDF]: agroecological practices -- including the very organic-farming techniques scorned by *The Economist* -- are at least as important as agrichemicals and biotechnology in terms of "feeding the world" in the decades to come. As for the alleged panacea of genetically modified seeds, the IAASTD was so unenthusiastic about GMOs that CropLife International, the trade group for the globe's dominant GMO/agrichemical purveyors, [angrily pulled out](#) [PDF] of participation shortly before its release -- as, disgracefully, did the U.S. and Canadian governments in solidarity.

Just last week, the U.N. Environment Program yet again came out against Big Ag, this time as part of its broad [Green Economy](#) initiative. The agency released an advance copy of a report called "Agriculture: Investing in Natural Capital." It amounts to a blistering assault on the agribusiness-as-usual model. It briskly names the main problems

with the goal of spreading U.S.-style industrial agriculture to the global south: Conventional/industrial agriculture is energy- and input-intensive. Its high productivity relies on the extensive use of petrochemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, fuel, water, and continuous new investment (e.g. in advanced seed varieties and machinery).

In place of the industrial model, the report calls for what it terms "green agriculture," characterized by low-tech, high-skilled methods like "restoring and enhancing soil fertility through the increased use of naturally and sustainably produced nutrient inputs; diversified crop rotations; and livestock and crop integration." In other words, the basic tenants of organic agriculture, which were developed by an [English plant pathologist drawing on the methods of Indian peasant farmers in the first half of the 20th century](#).

Such agriculture can indeed "feed the 9 billion," to use *The Economist's* phrase. The report concludes that "use of green agricultural practices and technologies" can boost global per capita calorie availability from today's 2,800 to around 3,200 calories by 2050. And it can do so in a way that doesn't drive millions of smallholder farmers off the land and into cities ill-equipped to absorb them, like the so-called Green Revolution transition to industrial farming in the '60s and '70s did in South Asia. "Green agriculture has the potential to be a net creator of jobs that provides higher return on labour inputs than conventional agriculture," the report states.

Transitioning to green agriculture will take serious investment, the report acknowledges: \$198 billion per year from 2011 to 2050. But the original Green Revolution required massive investments, too -- as do present-day schemes that involve "feeding the world" with patented biotech seeds, large, energy-sucking machines, and chemical fertilizers. And investing in green ag offers high returns:

Studies suggest that "Return on investments (ROI) in agricultural knowledge, science and technology across commodities, countries and regions on average are high (40-50 per cent) and have not declined over time. ... In terms of social gains, the Asian Development Bank Institute concluded that investment needed to move a household out of poverty through engaging farmers in organic agriculture could be only US\$32 to US\$38 per capita

This latest report confirms that there is indeed a consensus forming in development-policy circles on the feed-the-world question, but it's the opposite of what *The Economist* presented. Green ag, not Big Ag, points the way forward.

The question becomes, why are so many influential commentators behind the curve? How can *The Economist* so confidently pretend away the emerging consensus? (I can't resist noting that in the [acknowledgments](#) to its special food series, the magazine named as sources Monsanto, Syngenta, the Monsanto-funded Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, and Kraft Foods, along with the World Bank and the FAO.) Why did Obama staff his ag-policy positions with people who act like they've never heard anything but Big Ag propaganda? When is the Gates Foundation going to move its considerable resources behind green ag? How can a smart writer like *The Washington Post's* ace political blogger Ezra Klein casually declare, as he did last year, that "[Industrial farms are the future](#)," citing nothing more than a [half-baked newspaper report](#)? By all means, disagree with the consensus if you find it flawed; but acknowledge it, wrestle with the literature, refute it (if you can).

Perhaps the tide will turn with the ascension of veteran food writer Mark Bittman to *The New York Times* op-ed page -- still probably the nation's most influential opinion forum. In his [latest column](#), published today, Bittman teases out the implications of the new U.N. report. Are you listening, President Obama? Mr. Gates?

Tom Philpott is *Grist's* senior food and agriculture writer.

A special report on feeding the world

The 9 billion-people question

The world's population will grow from

almost 7 billion now to over 9 billion in 2050. John Parker asks if there will be enough food to go round

Feb 24th 2011 |The Economist



THE 1.6-hectare (4-acre) Broadbalk field lies in the centre of Rothamsted farm, about 40km (25 miles) north of London. In 1847 the farm's founder, Sir John Lawes, described its soil as a heavy loam resting on chalk and capable of producing good wheat when well manured. The 2010 harvest did not seem to vindicate his judgment. In the centre of the field the wheat is abundant, yielding 10 tonnes a hectare, one of the highest rates in the world for a commercial crop. But at the western end, near the manor house, it produces only 4 or 5 tonnes a hectare; other, spindlier, plants yield just 1 or 2 tonnes.

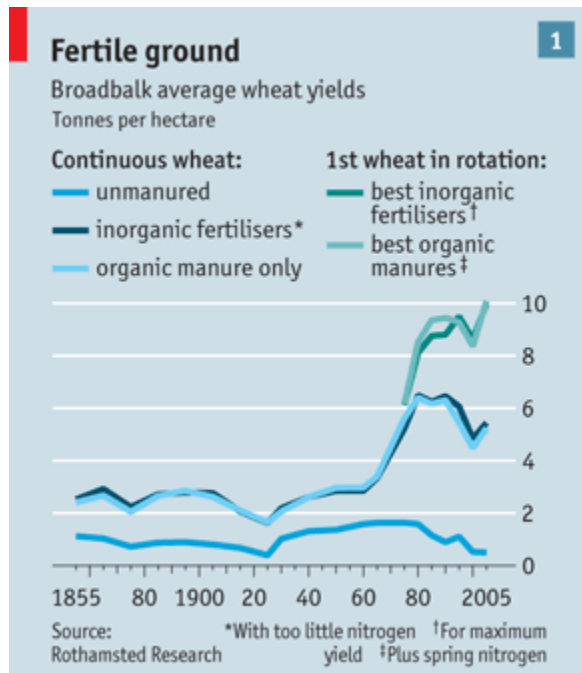
Broadbalk is no ordinary field. The first experimental crop of winter wheat was sown there in the autumn of 1843, and for the past 166 years the field, part of the Rothamsted Research station, has been the site of the longest-running continuous agricultural experiment in the world. Now different parts of the field are sown using different practices, making Broadbalk a microcosm of the state of world farming.

The wheat yielding a tonne a hectare is like an African field, and for the same reason: this crop has had no fertiliser, pesticide or anything else applied to it. African farmers are sometimes thought to be somehow responsible for their low yields, but the blame lies with the technology at their disposal. Given the same technology, European and American farmers get the same results.

The wheat bearing 4 or 5 tonnes a hectare is, roughly, like that of the Green Revolution, the transformation of agriculture that swept the world in the 1970s. It has been treated with herbicides and some fertilisers, but not up to the standard of the most recent agronomic practices, nor is it the highest-yielding semi-dwarf wheat variety. This is the crop of the Indian subcontinent and of Argentina.

The extraordinary results in the centre of the field are achieved by using the best plants, fertilisers, fungicides and husbandry. The yield is higher than the national average in Britain, and is as good as it gets.

Seeds of doubt



But the Broadbalk field shows something else. Chart 1 tracks its yields from the start, showing how the three different kinds of wheat farming—African, Green Revolution and modern—have diverged, sometimes quite suddenly: in the 1960s with the introduction of new herbicides for Green Revolution wheat, and in the 1980s with new fungicides and semi-dwarf varieties. Worryingly, though, in the past 15 years the yields of the most productive varieties of wheat in Broadbalk have begun to level out or even fall. The fear is that Broadbalk may prove a microcosm in this respect, too.

At the start of 2011 the food industry is in crisis. World food prices have risen above the peak they reached in early 2008 (see chart 2). That was a time when hundreds of millions of people fell into poverty, food riots were shaking governments in dozens of developing countries, exporters were banning grain sales abroad and "land grabs" carried out by rich grain-importing nations in poor agricultural ones were raising awkward questions about how best to help the poor.



This time, too, there have been export bans, food riots, panic buying and emergency price controls, just as in 2007-08. Fears that drought might ruin the current wheat crop in China, the world's largest, are sending shock waves through world markets. Discontent over rising bread prices has played a part in the popular uprisings throughout the Middle East. There are differences between the periods, but the fact that agriculture has experienced two big price spikes in under four years suggests that something serious is rattling the world's food chain.

The food industry has been attracting extra attention of other kinds. For years some of the most popular television programmes in English-speaking countries have been cooking shows. That may point to a healthy interest in food, but then again it may not. The historian Livy thought the Roman empire started to decay when cooks acquired celebrity status.

At a meeting of the Group of Eight (G8) industrial countries in 2009 the assembled leaders put food alongside the global financial crisis on their list of top priorities, promising to find \$20 billion for agriculture over three years. This year the current president of the Group of 20 (G20), France's Nicolas Sarkozy, wants to make food the top priority. The Gates Foundation, the world's richest charity, which had previously focused on health and development generally, started to concentrate more on feeding the world. At last month's World Economic Forum, a gathering of businesspeople and policymakers in Davos, 17 global companies launched what they described as "a new vision for agriculture", promising to do more to promote markets for smallholders—a sign of rising alarm in the private sector.

Anything for dinner?

Some of this public and political attention has been sporadic, but it is justified. An era of cheap food has come to an end. A combination of factors—rising demand in India and China, a dietary shift away from cereals towards meat and vegetables, the increasing use of maize as a fuel, and developments outside agriculture, such as the fall in the dollar—have brought to a close a period starting in the early 1970s in which the real price of staple crops (rice, wheat and maize) fell year after year.

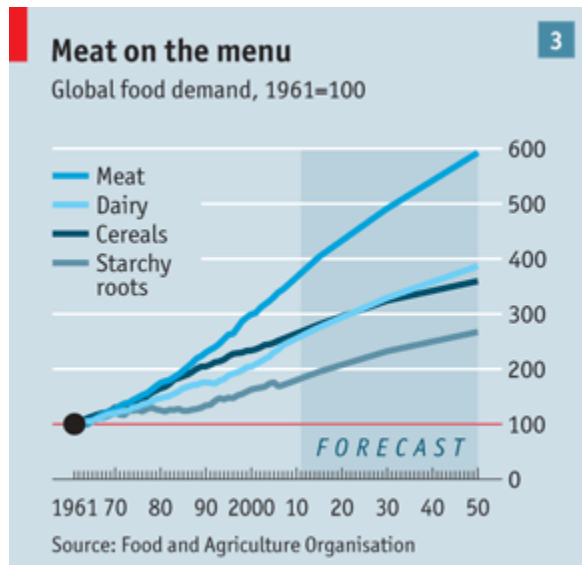
This has come as a shock. By the 1990s most agricultural problems seemed to have been solved. Yields were rising, pests appeared under control and fertilisers were replenishing tired soil. The exciting areas of research in life sciences were no longer plants but things like HIV/AIDS.

The end of the era of cheap food has coincided with growing concern about the prospects of feeding the world. Around the turn of 2011-12 the global population is forecast to rise to 7 billion, stirring Malthusian fears. The price rises have once again plunged into poverty millions of people who spend more than half their income on food. The numbers of those below the poverty level of \$1.25 a day, which had been falling consistently in the 1990s, rose sharply in 2007-08. That seems to suggest that the world cannot even feed its current population, let alone the 9 billion expected by 2050. Adding further to the concerns is climate change, of which agriculture is both cause and victim. So how will the world cope in the next four decades?

That question forms the backbone of this special report. The answer to it cannot be a straightforward technical or biological one because food is basic to life. In the Maya creation myth, the first humans were made of maize dough.

In the slang of Marathi, a language of west central India, the man on the street is known as "fried bread"-after the workers' favourite snack.

Because food is so important, agriculture-more than any other form of economic activity-is expected to achieve a series of competing and overlapping goals that change over time and from place to place. The world looks to farmers to do more than just produce food. Agriculture is also central to reducing hunger (which is not quite the same thing) and provides many people's main route out of poverty. Food is probably the biggest single influence on people's health, though in radically different ways in poor countries and in rich ones, where the big problem now is obesity. Food is also one of the few pleasures available to the poorest. In the *favelas* (slums) of São Paulo, the largest city in South America, takeaway pizza parlours are proliferating because many families, who often do not have proper kitchens, now order a pizza at home to celebrate special occasions.



Given these conflicting aims, it is not surprising that the food crisis has produced contradictory accounts of the main problem and radically different proposals for solving it. One group is concerned mainly about feeding the world's growing population. It argues that high and volatile prices will make the job harder and that more needs to be done to boost supplies through the spread of modern farming, plant research and food processing in poor countries. For those in this group-food companies, plant breeders and international development agencies-the Green Revolution was a stunning success and needs to be followed by a second one now.

The alternative view is sceptical of, or even downright hostile to, the modern food business. This group, influential among non-governmental organisations and some consumers, concentrates more on the food problems of richer countries, such as concerns about animal welfare and obesity. It argues that modern agriculture produces food that is tasteless, nutritionally inadequate and environmentally disastrous. It thinks the Green Revolution has been a failure, or at least that it has done more environmental damage and brought fewer benefits than anyone expected. An influential book espousing this view, Michael Pollan's "The Omnivore's Dilemma", starts by asking: "What should we have for dinner?" By contrast, those worried about food supplies wonder: "Will there be anything for dinner?" This special report concentrates on the problems of feeding the 9 billion. It therefore gives greater weight to the first group. It argues that many of their claims are justified: feeding the world in 2050 will be hard, and business as usual will not do it. The report looks at ways to boost yields of the main crops, considers the constraints of land and water and the use of fertiliser and pesticide, assesses biofuel policies, explains why technology matters so much and examines the impact of recent price rises. It points out that although the concerns of the critics of modern agriculture may be understandable, the reaction against intensive farming is a luxury of the rich. Traditional and organic farming could feed Europeans and Americans well. It cannot feed the world.

[Listen to an interview with the author of this special report](#)

Rep. Dennis Cardoza Accuses EPA Head of "Agency Activism"

The State Column, March 11, 2011

Rep. Dennis Cardoza released the following statement:

Today, U.S. Congressman Dennis Cardoza (CA-18) grilled Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson on the agency's lack of concern about the impact of its regulations on agriculture producers. Comparing the agency's zealotry to "judicial activism," Congressman Cardoza said the EPA's "agency activism" is burdening farmers with extreme regulations that are seriously impeding their ability to produce food for the nation. Congressman Cardoza, who is Ranking Member of the Livestock, Dairy and Poultry Subcommittee, questioned Administrator Jackson during a hearing held by the House Agriculture Committee.

Congressman Cardoza opened his questioning by voicing the concerns of many Valley farmers who feel the EPA has failed to listen to them.

"I believe that your agency is the most unpopular agency in farm country, from sea to shining sea. Bar none," said Congressman Cardoza.

"Have you heard of the term, 'judicial activism,'" Congressman Cardoza questioned. "I would submit that your agency often pursues a course of 'agency activism,' where you want to have jurisdiction over an issue, but the law may not quite say so.... You settle suits that allow you to go and pursue a course of action that you may not have the right to do within the law."

When Administrator Jackson defended the EPA's courses of action by saying the agency first consults with lawyers on what is required under the law, Congressman Cardoza pursued the issue, saying "You said...that you settle suits based on the grounds of what you believe you can live with.... Madam Administrator, you may be able to live with them, but the farmers in farm country can't.

"The reality is, that you are making it much more difficult, every day, to do exactly what my colleagues here...have talked about: providing the food, fiber and benefits of farming to our constituents."

Congressman Cardoza then questioned Administrator Jackson on why the EPA is proposing to eliminate current already-low food tolerance levels for products treated with sulfur dioxide, a product that eliminates contamination by pests and other disease carriers. Contaminated products cannot be sold in the United States, under Food and Drug Administration regulations.

Calling sulfur dioxide "critical to the protection of U.S. agriculture and especially specialty crops in California," Congressman Cardoza asked the EPA Administrator, "Can you tell me who are the actual beneficiaries of this proposed EPA action? And why is the Agency taking such an action, given the importance of this product to agriculture and public safety?"

Congressman Cardoza followed up with a question about the EPA's lack of leadership in

defending the safe, low-level use of pesticides by American farmers against misinformation by special interest groups.

"Every year the USDA and EPA work in conjunction to release the Pesticide Data Program report," said Congressman Cardoza. "This report is an important tool for EPA in setting tolerance levels for pesticide residues for various commodities. The report demonstrates a robust reporting process and year after year shows that the vast majority of fruits and vegetables fall overwhelmingly below the tolerances set by EPA."

Congressman Cardoza continued, "Yet, every year, there are groups which misconstrue this data to suggest certain conventionally grown commodities are unsafe for consumption. Can your office begin defending both the robust process which generates this report and the findings which demonstrate that safety of the food supply?"

Read more: http://www.thestatecolumn.com/state_politics/california/rep-dennis-cardoza-accuses-epa-head-of-agency-activism/#ixzz1GIgFKBrF



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