



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**News Release**

**NEIL ABERCROMBIE**  
GOVERNOR

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For Immediate Release: May 11, 2012

12-022

**STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES ADDRESS IMPROPER  
USE OF PESTICIDES ON BASIL GROWN AT O'AHU FARMS**

HONOLULU – This misuse of pesticides by some O'ahu basil farms has prompted state and federal authorities to develop a concerted plan to work with local farmers to prevent further mishandling and improper application of pesticides on farm produce.

Through an investigation of fresh basil samples grown on O'ahu, the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) recently identified four farms using unapproved pesticides on their basil crops. The pesticides are approved for use on other vegetables but not specifically for use on basil.

The DOH is working closely with the Hawai'i State Department of Agriculture (HDOA), University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), U.S. Department of Agriculture - Farm Service Agency (USDA-FSA), and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to address this serious issue of pesticide misuse.

HDOA, CTAHR and USDA will share resources and expertise to expand their established educational programs in order to quickly reach a broader segment of the farming community. The agencies have plans to expedite on-site training meetings with farmers about proper pesticide use, farm worker safety while applying pesticides, and correct selection of approved pesticides for specific crops.

"Working together, our agencies can reach out to and educate farm workers more quickly to ensure the safety of produce grown in Hawai'i," said DOH Deputy Director for Environmental Health Gary Gill. "We will expedite follow-up testing to confirm that these farms may resume their distribution and sale of basil."

(more)

“Educating farmers on the proper use of pesticides is key to increasing compliance,” said Russell S. Kokubun, Chairperson of the Hawai'i Board of Agriculture. “While the state takes seriously its responsibility to regulate the industry, we also are here to help Hawai'i farmers succeed and thrive.”

On April 17, 2012, DOH ordered Fat Law farm to cease the sale, delivery, holding or offering for sale of basil until further notice due to the presence of the unapproved pesticide methomyl. On April 20, the farm destroyed the implicated fields of adulterated basil.

The DOH conducted follow-up testing and collected 10 basil samples from 5 different produce distributors on O'ahu and found that 7 out of 10 samples were positive for the presence of one or more pesticides that are not approved for application on basil. Further laboratory testing of basil samples taken directly from six O'ahu farms indicated that four basil farms were positive for at least one pesticide that is not approved for application on basil. All contaminated crops have been restricted from sale and distribution.

DOH will continue its investigation and laboratory testing of fresh produce to identify any new sources of contamination for enforcement action while HDOA will conduct follow-up testing to verify corrective measures. DOH will notify farms when their produce is cleared.

Inspectors from the HDOA Pesticides Branch conduct on-farm inspections to verify compliance with pesticide labeling requirements and identify any misuse. The branch responds to reports from DOH inspectors who test produce at the wholesale level. Currently, pesticides inspectors are conducting investigations with the basil farmers involved in these incidents. The branch also schedules training sessions to help farmers understand pesticides regulations and the importance of proper use of pesticides.

The DOH protects public health by ensuring food products are safe. DOH programs conduct inspections of establishments statewide where food products are prepared, manufactured, distributed or sold. Programs also investigate complaints and collect samples for laboratory testing to determine compliance with product standards.

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