



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 23, 2019

19-057

Hawai'i Department of Health orders two O'ahu farms to cease sale of basil due to pesticide violation

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) Food and Drug Branch has ordered two O'ahu farms to cease the sale of fresh basil due to the presence of unapproved pesticides found on the products during routine sampling. Chun Lian Yuan farm in Kahuku and Bi Bo Wang farm in Kapolei were given the orders on Aug. 14 and 19 respectively.

DOH believes that the basil crops tested on Aug. 14 and 19 may have been distributed to consumers in Hawai'i. However, since the pesticide is allowed in greater amounts on other crops, the department does not consider the situation to be a significant threat to public health.

Basil samples were collected on Chun Lian Yuan farm on Aug. 9, 2019 and analyzed for the presence of pesticide residues. The results received from the state laboratory on Aug. 12 indicated a range of 0.042 to 0.099 parts per million (ppm) of dimethoate, a pesticide that is not approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use on basil. Dimethoate is approved by the EPA for use on a variety of vegetables and has an allowable range from 0.02 ppm for potatoes up to 2.0 ppm for leaf lettuce.

Two basil samples were also collected on Bi Bo Wang farm on Aug. 12 and analyzed for the presence of the pesticide, chlorothalonil. The results received Aug. 13 indicated that only one sample contained chlorothalonil residue, which was 0.024 ppm. Chlorothalonil, like dimethoate, is not approved for basil. It is, however, approved for use on other produce at a range of 1 ppm for blueberries up to 15 ppm for papaya.

Additional samples from both farms will be collected and analyzed to determine the presence of the unapproved pesticides. No basil will be allowed to be sold by the farm until subsequent samples indicate zero levels of the unapproved pesticides.

The DOH Food and Drug Branch routinely collects and tests a variety of produce samples each month for pesticide residues. Any sample found in violation is immediately followed with a cease and desist order, further sampling and education. The Food and Drug Branch safeguards public health by ensuring that food, drugs, cosmetics, and medical devices and related consumer products are safe and properly labeled.

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