

[<< back to story >>](#)

## Portland Press Herald    Maine Sunday Telegram

### Governor withdraws pesticides nominee

The decision follows a committee's rejection of Deborah Aldridge, an organic blueberry grower.

By ANN S. KIM, Staff Writer

August 21, 2008

Gov. John Baldacci on Wednesday withdrew his nomination of an organic blueberry grower to the Board of Pesticides Control after intense lobbying against her by groups that represent conventional farmers.

The move came at the request of Deborah Aldridge, whose nomination was rejected by the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry the day before.

Aldridge would have needed a two-thirds vote of the full Senate to win confirmation.

Aldridge is believed to be the first nominee to the board who failed to win committee endorsement since the board's current structure was established in 1980.

She would have filled an empty seat that had been held by another organic farmer.

It is one of two seats on the seven-member board that must be filled by members with a demonstrated interest in environmental protection.

Aldridge said she was bewildered by her committee hearing, which ended with a 7-to-3 vote against her.

The committee endorsed the nomination of three others. They won unanimous confirmation by the Senate on Wednesday.

"They really kept hammering on me about how I felt about pesticides and their use. I said, clearly, on many occasions, there is a need for it," Aldridge said by telephone from her farm in Jonesboro.

Sen. John Nutting, who co-chairs the agriculture committee, said there was intense lobbying against Aldridge from various groups, although they did not, for the most part, testify at the hearing.

"Her views toward conventional agriculture were concerning to just about all of the groups, be it the Farm Bureau, the Maine Dairymen's Association, the Maine Blueberry Commission, the Maine Potato Board," said Nutting, a Leeds Democrat who voted against Aldridge.

Some of the concern stemmed from a letter Aldridge sent to the board that expressed support for a 500-foot buffer for aerial spraying.

That letter, Nutting said, was widely circulated in the blueberry community.

The board is working on recommendations for aerial spraying that will be presented to lawmakers.

Aldridge may also have been hurt by comments she made about her blueberry fields.

Nutting interpreted them to mean that she felt her fields were unhealthy when they were conventionally farmed, but now healthy under organic practices.

Aldridge, however, said there were many reasons behind the fields' current health, including the use of natural pollinators and her practice of not burning fields.

Sen. Margaret Rotundo, D-Lewiston, said Aldridge would have brought a valuable perspective to the board, which relies on a diversity of perspectives to work through thorny issues.

Rotundo voted for Aldridge.

Rotundo said the questioning at the hearing suggested that farmers on the committee felt Aldridge wasn't

sympathetic to conventional agriculture.

But Rotundo said there was no one publicly presented compelling evidence that Aldridge was unfit to serve.

"The person who came before us certainly didn't seem like an extremist," Rotundo said.

Heather Spalding, associate director of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, said her impression is that committee members do not want organic farming represented on the board.

"We are concerned about this because we are part of Maine's agricultural community," she said.

David Farmer, the governor's spokesman, said Baldacci was deeply disappointed.

"Certainly, it is a disturbing message -- the experience this woman has as a conventional farmer and an organic farmer -- that she isn't suitable for a seat at the table," Farmer said. "That's outrageous."

The seat on the pesticides control board will remain open until at least January. It has been unfilled since September 2007.

Staff Writer Ann S. Kim can be contacted at 791-6383 or at:

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[<< back to story >>](#)

# KENNEBEC JOURNAL

## Morning Sentinel

### Whispers, not fact, pivotal in nominee defeat

KENNEBEC JOURNAL *Morning Sentinel*

08/22/2008

By law, the state board that controls the use of pesticides must have at least two members with "a demonstrated interest in environmental protection."

Gov. John Baldacci, presented with a vacancy on the board for a seat that had been filled by an organic farmer, nominated Deborah Aldridge of Jonesboro. She's a former conventional blueberry farmer and now a certified organic farmer. She served on the Sunrise County Wild Blueberry Association, where she was a member of the board of directors. And Aldridge has been a frequent attendee at Board of Pesticides Control meetings over the years.

In the breadth of her experience, Aldridge was highly qualified to be a member of the board. She seemed like a perfect fit for one of the environmental seats mandated by law.

But she didn't get it. This week, the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee voted, 7-to-3, to deny Aldridge the seat on the board. It was a stunning defeat, and a rare occurrence for a nominee.

And it happened because of whispers.

At the committee hearing on Aldridge's nomination, not one group testified against her.

But she was met with hostility by all but a handful of lawmakers who, she told Portland Press-Herald reporter Ann S. Kim, "really kept hammering on me about how I felt about pesticides and their use. I said, clearly, on many occasions, there is a need for it."

Committee chairman Sen. John Nutting, D-Leeds, a dairy farmer who led the charge against Aldridge, said, "Her views toward conventional agriculture were concerning to just about all of the groups, be it the Farm Bureau, the Maine Dairymen's Association, the Maine Blueberry Commission, the Maine Potato Board." Particularly problematic, said Nutting, was a letter, widely circulated among blueberry farmers, that Aldridge sent to the Pesticides Control Board suggesting a 500-foot buffer for aerial spraying.

If Nutting heard opposition from those groups, they certainly didn't express it at the hearing. Neither the Farm Bureau nor the Maine Potato Board nor the Maine Dairy Industry Association (the Dairymen's Association hasn't existed since 1969) nor the Maine Wild Blueberry Commission testified against Aldridge.

And as Don Flannery, head of the Maine Potato Board said, "If we really wanted to express our concern, we could have done so."

Aldridge's rejection by the committee caused her to withdraw her nomination before a Senate vote that was likely to confirm her rejection.

The failed nomination happens in the midst of struggle by the pesticides board over appropriate limits on aerial pesticide spraying. Environmentalists as well as neighborhood activists have long questioned the safety of aerial spraying when it's done near residences or water bodies. In the last few years, lawsuits

have been threatened against blueberry growers Downeast, the board has received petitions to ban aerial spraying and legislation has been introduced to change spraying regulations.

So the pesticides board has been working to revise its rules. It's been a vexing issue and a drawn-out battle. The board has been pressured on one side by those conventional growers who want to continue aerial spraying with a minimum of rules. On the other side are organic growers who want limits on spraying that include large buffer zones.

The lawmakers who devised the board's current structure wisely designed it to accommodate the range of Maine's agricultural universe, and it does. Besides the two environmental positions, there are three others for those with knowledge about pesticides in agriculture, forestry or commercial applications, one seat for someone with a medical background and another for a University of Maine faculty member in agronomy or entomology.

That's precisely the range of opinions that would produce good new policy on aerial spraying and any number of other important issues regarding pesticides.

But a candidate who had all the right qualifications for the board, whose nomination hearing featured not one group opposed to that nomination, who expressed openness to both conventional and organic methods of farming, had her nomination shot down.

Aldridge should have been confirmed.

We wonder which well-qualified person will next allow the governor to place their name in nomination?

[<< back to story >>](#)

## Portland Press Herald    Maine Sunday Telegram

### Nothing wrong with organic supporter on pesticide board

This was a seat intended for someone who did not share the views of traditional agriculture.

August 24, 2008

Though she strongly rebuts the claim, the organic blueberry farmer nominated to the state Board of Pesticides Control could perhaps be as antagonistic toward conventional farming as critics say. But even if that were the case, one is compelled to ask: So what?

Gov. Baldacci has withdrawn Deborah Aldridge's nomination to the board after the Legislature's Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry voted 7-3 against recommending her for the post. It seems there was heavy lobbying against Aldridge's nomination from agricultural organizations. The committee chairman, Sen. John Nutting, D-Leeds, said the Farm Bureau, the Maine Dairyman's Association, the Maine Blueberry Commission and the Maine Potato Board all expressed concern with the selection.

At issue is Aldridge's advocacy for organic farming and the perception that she might oppose pesticide use by traditional farmers.

The concerns might be valid if the pesticides board were stacked with people who harbored doubts about pesticide use in traditional agriculture, but that's not the case. In fact, Aldridge was nominated to fill a seat that is supposed to represent the interests of the organic farming community.

The pesticides board is structured to bring different perspectives together, including voices one would expect to generally support pesticide use in traditional agriculture as well as those who might have reservations about it.

It's true, as far as the farming interests cited by Nutting are concerned, Aldridge's views on the use of pesticides likely do not reflect theirs. But she was nominated precisely because of that differing point of view, not in spite of it.

We doubt we would always agree with Aldridge on the issues expected to come before the board, but that doesn't mean her perspective would not have been valuable.

Baldacci should bring forth another nominee for this seat who is as committed to the organic farming movement as Aldridge is.

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[<< back to story >>](#)

# **Bangor Daily News Editorial, 8/27/08**

## **Nomination Failure**

Lawmakers shortchanged the public last week by quickly dismissing two qualified candidates for state boards based on narrow views of what nominees are supposed to look like. Rather than face a bruising fight in the Senate, the governor withdrew the nominations.

Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry balked at the governor's nomination of Deborah Aldridge of Jonesboro to serve on the Board of Pesticides Control. Committee members said her views that pesticide use should be restricted, especially her support for a 500-foot buffer for aerial spraying, disqualified her, although none of the state's agriculture groups testified against her nomination.

This thinking perverts the role of the pesticides board. The board is responsible for pesticide regulation, not promotion, and its membership is meant to be a mix of people.

By statute the members must include three persons knowledgeable about pesticides in agriculture, forestry or commercial applications. One person must have a medical background and another must hold a faculty position in either agronomy or entomology at the University of Maine. The remaining two members are selected to represent expertise in environmental issues.

Ms. Aldridge fell into the last category and her experience as a blueberry grower who switched from conventional to organic methods would have brought a valuable perspective to the board. She was nominated to replace another organic blueberry grower.

By voting against her nomination, seven members of the committee appear to be trying to rewrite state statute by increasing the representation of pesticide users on the board.

The governor had nominated Kimm Collins of Falmouth to serve on the new Board of Corrections, which is meant to coordinate the state's prison system and county jails to reduce duplication and save money. She is a former police officer and social worker. Her nomination was rejected by the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee because they said she didn't know enough about finances.

Again, this board is meant to include members with a variety of perspectives and back-grounds and requiring each nominee to understand finances is an unnecessarily high hurdle. Ms. Collins' understanding of how law enforcement officials, inmates and victims interact with the corrections system would have been a good addition to the board.

Lawmakers on both committees approved the nine male nominees to the two boards, prompting some to wonder if sexism was the real issue. We certainly hope that was not the case.

If this is the treatment potential board members, who are not paid for their service, can expect, it will be much harder to get qualified people to take these important positions. That doesn't serve the state well.

[<< back to story >>](#)

## Portland Press Herald    Maine Sunday Telegram

*MAINE GARDENER*

### Leave pesticide disposal to the state: Here's how

TOM ATWELL

August 24, 2008



Courtesy Maine Board of Pesticides Control  
Some of the materials turned in last year in Augusta.

Some pesticides used on gardens in the past were so dangerous, they have since been banned. Think of DDT, the insecticide linked to the near extinction of the bald eagle, and 2,4,5-T, one of the two components in Agent Orange. Other formerly common, now banned substances are chlordane and lead arsenate.

Just because these pesticides are no longer legal doesn't mean they are no longer around. They turn up regularly in basements and barns, often when the properties are sold.

Next month, the Board of Pesticides Control, a division of the Maine Department of Agriculture, will collect and dispose of banned and otherwise unusable pesticides free of charge.

People who want to get rid of pesticides – whether they are banned or unusable because they have gotten wet, frozen or otherwise damaged – should sign up at the board's Web site – [www.thinkfirstspraylast.org](http://www.thinkfirstspraylast.org) – or call 287-2731 by Sept. 15. Once a person registers, staff members will provide instructions on the proper packaging and transportation of the material.

"That is why we don't announce the date and exact locations of the collection sites," Paul Schlein, the board's public information officer, said. "We don't want people showing up unannounced with improperly handled material."

But they definitely want people to turn in the material. The four collection sites are in Portland, Augusta, Bangor and Presque Isle. But Schlein said board staffers will make arrangements to pick up material if people can't make it to those sites.

Schlein urged people to take advantage of this year's collection. Last year, the board had two collection dates. This year, it has one. And the staff fears that the worsening economy and the state's financial problems could result in the program being eliminated.

Schlein said getting rid of the materials through private waste disposal firms is expensive. One person contacted a private firm and was told it would cost \$10,000 to get rid of material found in the barn of a house she had purchased.

And while the Board of Pesticide Control cares about saving people money, it is more concerned about keeping pesticides out of Maine's air, groundwater, lakes and streams. If people don't have a simple, inexpensive way to dispose of such material, they might be tempted to dump it illegally.

Schlein said the state collects about 6,000 pounds of material for each collection, although in the early years of the program, which began in 1982, there were years when incredible volumes of pesticides were turned in.

Schlein said the collection is limited to pesticides. It will take fertilizer only if it is the weed-and-feed type, which contains herbicides to kill the weeds. Most municipalities hold annual collections of hazardous material, including fertilizer, petroleum products and other chemicals.

If a farmer or gardener has pesticides that are still legal and usable but wants to get rid of them because the garden is going organic, the board will take them. But the staff probably would try to encourage the person to

give them to someone who is still using pesticides.

"These pesticides are quite expensive," he said. "Our first goal is to keep these things out of the waste stream."

All of the collected materials are taken to out-of-state disposal facilities, where they are incinerated or reprocessed.

Tom Atwell can be contacted at 791-6362 or at:

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[<< back to story >>](#)

# KENNEBEC JOURNAL

## Collection set for home toxics

BY KEITH EDWARDS

Staff Writer

KENNEBEC JOURNAL Morning Sentinel

08/14/2008

AUGUSTA -- Maine residents with banned or unusable pesticides lurking in their basements, garages or back sheds will have a chance this fall to get rid of the stuff -- legally and safely.

The Maine Board of Pesticides Control will collect and dispose of banned pesticides or pesticides that have become caked, frozen or otherwise unusable at four sites throughout the state this fall.

Preregistration is required by Sept. 15.

Hundreds of Maine citizens may be unaware of the dangerous chemicals sitting in their homes, including DDT, lead arsenate, and other banned or obsolete pesticides, according to Paul Schlein, public information officer for the Board of Pesticides Control.

Often, Schlein noted, new owners of older homes or farms discover they have "inherited" hazardous waste from the previous owner.

When they do, citizens may consider hiring a hazardous waste disposal service, at great cost to them, or dump the chemicals illegally, potentially harming the environment and public health.

Instead, the Board of Pesticides Control is offering a third option, at no cost to the person disposing of the obsolete pesticide.

"While offering free obsolete pesticide disposal is expensive for us, it's a bargain compared to the cost of cleaning up contaminated soil or water," Schlein said. "We urge people holding these chemicals to contact us immediately to register."

Schlein said past collection events have turned up a wide variety of potentially dangerous pesticides, including an entire barrel of DDT and loose bags of chemical dust from an old farm.

The collected chemicals will go to out-of-state disposal facilities licensed by the federal Environmental Protection Agency where they are incinerated or reprocessed.

Collection events will take place in October in four locations -- Augusta, Portland, Bangor and Presque Isle. No items will be accepted from people who have not preregistered.

"People have to preregister and we ask them what they'll be bringing in, so we, and the company disposing of the pesticides, know what to expect," Schlein said.

To register, find out more information, or to learn about the temporary storage and transportation of obsolete pesticides, go to the Maine Board of Pesticides Control Web site at [www.thinkfirstspraylast.org](http://www.thinkfirstspraylast.org). Or, call 287-2731.

The board has a list of banned pesticides, so officials can provide assistance in determining if residents' pesticides should be disposed of in the collection event.

Schlein said funding for future collections is not guaranteed, so he suggested residents participate this year.

Keith Edwards -- 621-5647

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# Morning Sentinel

## FREE PESTICIDE DISPOSAL HELPS US AND ENVIRONMENT

**KENNEBEC JOURNAL** *Morning Sentinel*

08/16/2008

Now, there's no excuse.

The rusted jerry cans out in the shed that the former owner of your home left -- you know, those cans with foul-smelling stuff that singes your nasal hairs when you take a whiff of it? Those industrial-sized containers of weed killer that your dad left in your garage when he moved to Arizona?

You can get rid of any potentially toxic old pesticides safely now. No dumping in storm drains during the dead of night. No burning in your back yard. No pouring down the toilet. Those are all big no-no's for such materials, which can harm anything they come into contact with. What you don't know can hurt you, and those ancient containers of unidentified or obsolete weedkillers, bugkillers or rat poison need to be disposed of properly.

Which is just what you'll be able to do if you register, before Sept. 15, with the state Board of Pesticides Control, which will then arrange to have you drop off your nasty collection. They're doing all of us -- and the little and big critters in Maine's landscape -- a big favor by offering to properly dispose of, for free, the old pesticides that may be lurking on your property.

While it will cost the state to do the collection and pay for the disposal, it's less money than the state would likely pay in the event of a toxic spill and cleanup necessary if one of these substances gets into the environment.

So check out the board's Web site, [www.thinkfirstspraylast.org](http://www.thinkfirstspraylast.org), or call 287-2731. You'll be doing a good deed.



# Rockport shouts stop the presses on pesticide newsletter

By Stephen Betts  
*The Camden Herald Reporter*

ROCKPORT (Aug 19): The Rockport Conservation Commission will need to edit the newsletter it proposes to mail to every household because of concerns by the Select Board that the wording will “scare the bejesus” out of the citizens. Advertisement



Rockport Conservation Commission Chairman Steve McAllister listens to comments from Rockport Select Board members on Monday night. (Photo by Stephen Betts)

The discussion promoted several exchanges Monday night between Select Board members and Conservation Commission Chairman Steve McAllister.

The Select Board asked to review the newsletter before it was mailed to residents with town money. The newsletter’s production follows the adoption in the spring of a pesticide policy by the town for town-owned properties.

McAllister said the aim is simply to inform residents of options other than chemicals for maintaining gardens and lawns.

The debate, however, turned to whether the newsletter went too far to try to promote safe environmental practices.

Select Board Chairman Robert Duke said he wondered if the wording in the newsletter was too strong.

“This will scare the bejesus out of people,” Duke said.

Board member William Chapman said his concern was that this would be viewed as the first step in banning pesticides from use on both public and private properties.

McAllister repeatedly asked whether there was any misinformation in the proposed newsletter.

Duke repeated that the newsletter takes some information and is being used to scare people.

“You scare pretty easy,” McAllister said.

Chapman asked why there was no cost benefit comparison of using alternatives to pesticides and using pesticides.

Select Board Vice Chairman Thomas Murphy said the newsletter should eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive by focusing on the alternatives rather than pointing out the dangers of pesticides.

Select Board member Thomas Farley said that any claims made in the newsletter should be scientifically supported. Farley argued that everyone jumped on board the anti-nuclear power bandwagon but it is now being used safely across Europe.

Select Board member Alexandra Fogel said she too wanted to see the positive stressed in the newsletter rather than saying that everyone was going to die by using pesticides. Murphy added that even if everyone was going to die, the newsletter shouldn't say it but should focus on what can be done positively.

“So we're going to hide the facts from the public?” McAllister asked.

Murphy said the newsletter should simply offer the positive options to pesticides.

Fogel said she would work with McAllister to edit the newsletter before it is sent out to townspeople.

The proposed newsletter points out that the town adopted the pesticide management policy to ensure that the town's playgrounds, ball fields and town parks would be safe for their families, pets and the environment.

The newsletter then included statements about pesticide use such as:

- “Each year, homeowners in the U.S. use approximately 70 million pounds of pesticides to maintain the beauty of their lawn. Researchers continue to uncover links between pesticide exposure and serious illnesses such as cancer, neurological and reproductive disorders as well as birth defects.”
- “Our children and pets are especially vulnerable to the toxic chemicals we use in and out of our home. They play on the floor and grass. Hands go unwashed, paws are licked and both have extremely sensitive immune systems that can be affected. Pesticide granulates can be tracked into the home and make their way into carpet where they can remain for months. Granules spread on lawns can remain there for much longer than their warnings describe. The half life of some fertilizers can be more than one year. Plenty of time for pets or wildlife to consume them.”
- “Each year, the use of lawn pesticides by homeowners accounts for most of the wildlife poisonings reported to the EPA. Birds are serious victims because they are ground feeders and think pesticide granulates are food.”
- “Each year, we dump tens of millions of pounds of fertilizers and pesticides on our backyards, thus poisoning birds and wildlife while creating one of the largest sources of pollution runoff in our lakes and streams.”
- “Of the 50 chemicals on the EPA's list of unregulated drinking water contaminants, several are lawn chemicals including diazinon, diuron, naphthalene, and various triazines such as atrazine.”

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-----Original Message-----

**From:** MORIN, KIMBERLY A [AG/1000] [mailto:kimberly.a.morin@monsanto.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, July 27, 2008 11:06 PM

**To:** Jennings, Henry; Hicks, Lebel

**Subject:** NEWS RELEASE: NEW INSECT PROTECTION TECHNOLOGY FROM MONSANTO COMPANY DEREGULATED BY USDA

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Analyst: Scarlett Foster (314-694-8148)

## **NEW INSECT PROTECTION TECHNOLOGY FROM MONSANTO COMPANY DEREGULATED BY USDA**

*Second Generation Corn Borer Technology Offers Greater Control of Common Pests and Provides Reduced Refuge Opportunity for Southern U.S. Growers*

**ST. LOUIS** (July 24, 2008) The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has deregulated MON 89034, a new insect protection technology from Monsanto Company (NYSE: MON). Commercially, this new above ground insect control technology will be stacked with our leading below ground and Roundup Ready technologies to be sold as YieldGard VT Triple PRO™.

Pending appropriate import approvals, YieldGard VT Triple PRO is expected to be commercially available to U.S. farmers for planting in 2009.

The dual Bt protein technology in MON 89034 is also slated for use in SmartStax, a new corn platform developed by Monsanto and Dow AgroSciences with targeted availability to farmers in 2010. SmartStax will provide industry-leading protection from weeds and insects by bringing together the most comprehensive package of in-plant protection in one seed.

The YieldGard family of technologies uses a naturally-occurring bacteria found in the soil known as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) to provide in-plant protection from the yield-robbing insects that feed on the corn plant. When improved through biotechnology, the corn plant produces the Bt protein(s) which, when eaten by insects feeding on the plant, is lethal to these specific insects.

YieldGard VT Triple PRO represents a step-change in Bt technology for insect protection in corn. It is the first technology to produce two different Bt proteins to protect the corn plant from common above-ground insects that feed on the plant, such as European corn borer, corn earworm, and fall armyworm while also providing the existing rootworm protection and Roundup Ready traits in a single plant.

"This technology will offer corn growers the industry's first dual mode-of-action insect protection for corn borers, controlling a broader spectrum of insects above ground," said Andrew Duff, Corn Traits Marketing Manager, Monsanto Company. "The dual-effective dose offered by YieldGard VT Triple PRO has been approved for a refuge reduction in cotton-growing regions of the South and has the opportunity to further reduce refuge acres in the Corn Belt as well. This provides growers with an opportunity for increased yield and profitability on their farms."

Currently corn growers are required to plant a “structured refuge” or plots of corn that do not use Bt technology near corn acres using in-plant protection. The current required percentage of refuge acres varies based on specific geography, but in general is set at 50 percent in the southern United States and 20 percent in the Corn Belt. Beginning in 2009, southern growers can take advantage of this reduced refuge opportunity by planting YieldGard VT Triple PRO.

Research conducted by Monsanto and reviewed by scientists at key academic institutions indicates the use of dual protein technologies, like the dual proteins for corn borer in YieldGard VT Triple PRO, allows the percentage of structured refuge in southern cotton-growing states to be reduced without negatively impacting long term effectiveness of the technology. EPA previously granted a reduced refuge requirement for YieldGard VT Triple PRO in southern states dropping the corn borer refuge requirements from 50 to 20 percent.

With previous U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and EPA clearances, the USDA deregulation allows the 2009 launch of YieldGard VT Triple PRO in the U.S. Key international import approvals for MON 89034 have been achieved in Japan, Mexico, Canada and Colombia with other import regulatory clearances in process.

#### **About Monsanto Company**

Monsanto Company is a leading provider of technology-based solutions and agricultural products that improve farm productivity and food quality. For more information on Monsanto, see <http://www.monsanto.com/>.

*Note to editor: YieldGard VT Triple PRO is a trademark of Monsanto Company and its wholly owned subsidiaries.*



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## eCALScconnect

Vol. 14-4 / June 2008

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### New study shows that transgenic plants don't hurt beneficial bugs

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By Marissa Fessenden

Genetically modified (GM) plants that use Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), a common soil bacterium, to kill pests won't harm the pests' natural enemies, according to new research by Cornell entomologists.



Joe Ogradnick

Larva of the diamondback moth, a devastating worldwide vegetable pest. Inset: The parasitic wasp *Diadegma insulare*, that kills the diamondback caterpillar, but was not injured by Bt or Bt plants in a Cornell study, showing that Bt does not harm beneficial organisms. Note: The two insects pictured here are not to scale.

That is welcome news for ecologists and farmers in the debate over GM plants. Much of the debate surrounding the use of GM crops focuses on their effect on organisms that aren't pests.

The research showed that GM plants expressing Bt insecticidal proteins are not toxic to a parasite that lives inside the caterpillar of the diamondback moth, a devastating worldwide vegetable pest. It was published in the May 27 issue of the online scientific journal PLoS One.

"The conservation of parasites is important for enhancing natural biocontrol that will help suppress pest populations as well as reduce the potential for the pest insects to develop resistance to the Bt," explained Anthony Shelton, Cornell professor of entomology at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, N.Y., who conducted the study with postdoctoral associate Mao Chen. "Our studies make it clear that Bt plants are a win-win situation to control pest insects and to enhance biocontrol and biodiversity."

The Bt bacterium, which is not harmful to humans, has been used for decades as a leaf spray and since 1996, in GM plants, a method that has proven much more effective and is now more widely used. Both uses are approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In 2007, Bt corn and cotton plants were grown in 22 countries on 104 million acres, according to Shelton.

"Few studies have examined the effect of Bt plants on parasites of caterpillars, but some of them have reported negative impacts," said Chen, noting that the new research suggests that those negative findings were likely due to testing methods.

To separate out the effect of insecticides and Bt proteins on the caterpillar and parasite, the Cornell researchers isolated

## New study shows that transgenic plants don't hurt beneficial bugs

and bred strains of caterpillars that were resistant to Bt or a conventional or organic insecticide. Then the caterpillars were parasitized with a wasp that kills the caterpillar in nature.

The resistant caterpillars were then either fed GM plants expressing the Bt protein or non-GM plants sprayed with the Bt protein, conventional insecticides or organic insecticides.

The parasitized caterpillars that ate plants treated with conventional and organic insecticides to which they were resistant, survived and developed into moths because the parasite was killed by the insecticide the caterpillar ingested. However, when the caterpillar fed on the Bt-sprayed plants or Bt plants, the parasite was not affected and killed its host caterpillar when it emerged as an adult wasp, showing that Bt plants are not toxic to the parasite.

Other Cornell researchers involved in the study include Elizabeth Earle and Jun Cao from the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics and Jian-Zhou Zhao and Hilda Collins from the Department of Entomology. The work was supported by a grant from the USAID Program for Biosafety Systems.

Marissa Fessenden '09 is an intern with CALS Communications.

## Farmers' survey

### Spain: experience of Bt maize

**So far Bt maize is the only genetically modified plant approved for cultivation in Europe. Large quantities of this maize are grown in Spain in particular – in 2007 it accounted for around 17 per cent of Spain's total maize growing area. Now for the first time farmers' experiences of Bt maize have been recorded in a survey published in the journal Nature Biotechnology.**



Bt maize produces a protein which is toxic to its pest, the European corn borer

Bt maize with built-in resistance to the European corn borer, a major maize pest, has been grown in Spain since 1998. Consequently, Spanish farmers now have nine years' experience of growing Bt maize commercially. In 2007 around 75,000 hectares of land was planted with the MON810 strain of Bt maize. In regions heavily infested with the European corn borer, transgenic maize accounts for up to 60 percent of the maize growing area.

The survey covered 195 farmers who grow Bt maize and 184 conventional maize growers. They were asked to provide information about yields, seed costs, maize prices obtained and use and costs of insecticides from 2002 to 2004.

Researchers at the University of Cordoba were among those conducting the survey in the three main Bt maize growing areas, the provinces of Zaragoza in Aragon, Lleida in Catalonia and Albacete in Castile-La Mancha.

To rule out the possibility that variations in yield could be attributed to varying levels of expertise amongst the farmers, for example, socio-economic profiles of the farmers were also compiled. This showed that the two groups (Bt maize growers and conventional farmers) were comparable. There were no statistically significant differences in their property circumstances, size of farms, main crop grown, age, education or experience of maize cultivation.

#### Higher yields with Bt maize during severe corn borer infestation

In the three years from 2002 to 2004, the farmers who grew Bt maize obtained higher average yields than the farmers who grew conventional maize. However, higher yields of statistical significance (11.8%) were recorded only in Aragon. According to the authors of the study, even though no data was available on European corn borer infestation and the resulting damage for these regions during the period of investigation, there were nonetheless indications of a more severe corn borer infestation in Aragon.

Regional variations in the yield increases could also be attributed to a lack of suitable Bt maize varieties for the particular regional conditions. In 2003 only two Bt maize varieties were commercially available in Spain, and yet by 2006 there were more than forty. But the most likely explanation for the slight variations is pest pressure, which varies from year to year.

## Related links

EU JRC: Bt corn in Spain - the performance of the EU's first GM crop



Maize yields in three Spanish provinces in 2004. Only in Zaragoza/Aragon were Bt maize yields significantly higher than those of conventional maize.



Number of insecticide applications in conventional maize (0.86 per year on average)



Number of insecticide applications in Bt maize (0.32 per year on average)



The yield increases also resulted in direct increases in the incomes of the farmers growing Bt maize, since the farmers obtain the same price for fodder maize regardless of whether it is transgenic or not (0.13 euros per kilogram). Conventional maize was not able to command a higher price than Bt maize during the years of study.

#### **Fewer insecticide applications with Bt maize**

However, there were differences in insecticide and seed costs.

**Insecticide use:** the European corn borer can be controlled using conventional insecticides only during a limited time frame – between when the larvae hatch and when they start to bore into the stems. Nonetheless, spraying is sometimes carried out outside this period. In conventional maize cultivation an average of 0.86 insecticide treatments per year were carried out, but only 0.32 on Bt maize fields. No insecticide was used on 70 percent of the Bt maize fields. Likewise, 42 percent of the conventional fields were farmed without the use of insecticides.

**Seed costs:** only in Aragon, where the majority of Bt maize is grown and the highest yields were obtained, did farmers have to pay a significant premium for Bt seed compared with conventional seed.

On balance, farmers in Aragon earned up to 122 euros per hectare more per year once insecticide and seed costs had been deducted. In other regions profits were only marginal and the incentive to grow Bt maize was probably lower as a result.

The farmers were also asked to give reasons why they do or do not grow Bt maize. The most frequently cited reasons were:

- reduced risk of losses as a result of corn borer damage

- higher yield

- better quality of harvest

The use of Bt varieties was associated with less damage to the plants, reduced sensitivity to fungal attack after harvest and a corresponding reduction in mycotoxin contamination.

The commonest reason given by conventional farmers for not switching to Bt maize was simply that they were reluctant to change.

#### **More from GMO Safety**

- National coexistence rules: Spain

- Coexistence: GM and non-GM crops

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April 14, 2008





During a world food crisis, Monsanto just raised the price of its corn seed \$100 a bag

<http://www.opednews.com/articles/During-a-world-food-crisis...>

Organization for Competitive Markets, July 22 2008

Lincoln, NE - The Organization for Competitive Markets (OCM) says Monsanto's market power is driving up seed prices and devastating farmers and their communities. OCM sent a letter explaining the economic implications of Monsanto's seed prices on rural communities to 23 state attorneys general today. The organization continues to encourage several state attorneys general to expand their antitrust investigation into Monsanto's suspected anticompetitive practices in the U.S. seed industry

"Monsanto's market power has been quietly accruing over several years and has now begun materially impacting price," said Keith Mudd, OCM's board president. "The lack of competition and innovation in the marketplace has reduced farmers' choices and enabled Monsanto to raise prices unencumbered."

Monsanto executives recently told DTN that they expect to raise the price of some seed corn varieties to \$300. The Monsanto executives consider themselves only restrained by the "red-face test." "There is no competitive restraint to this price hike," said Mudd.

OCM points to a specific quote from the DTN article:

Even the list price on seed corn will topple the \$300 per bag barrier starting this fall, up about \$95 to \$100 per bag, or 35 percent on average, according to Monsanto officials who met with DTN and Progressive Farmer editors this week. For 2009, 76 percent of the company's corn sales will be triple stack, 'so we think we can get the pricing right to show farmers the benefits,' John Jansen, Monsanto's corn traits lead. 'We can pass the red-faced test from the Panhandle of Texas to McLean County, Ill.'

"A \$100 price increase is a tremendous drain on rural America," said Fred Stokes, OCM's executive director. "Let's say a farmer in Iowa who farms 1,000 acres plants one of these expensive corn varieties next year. The gross increased cost is more than \$40,000. Yet there's no scientific basis to justify this price hike. How can we let companies get away with this?" continued Stokes.

The lack of innovation and choice in the seed industry, as well as increased prices, will only get worse over time. "If and when the ethanol boom subsides, Monsanto will not lower its prices, farmers will be forced into bankruptcy, and the lack of an effective remedy for antitrust in crop seed will be a substantial cause," added Stokes.

OCM is a nonprofit organization working for open and competitive markets and fair trade for American food producers, consumers and rural communities. OCM's Seed Concentration Project aims to foster competition, innovation and choice in the crop seed industry.

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## Damaging herbicide drift can travel far

Jul 24, 2008 10:22 AM, By David Bennett  
Farm Press Editorial Staff

Every year, Eric Webster receives many calls on Newpath and Roundup drift. “The glyphosate drift is primarily in northeast Louisiana,” said the LSU AgCenter weed scientist at the recent field day at the Rice Research Station in Crowley, La. In southwest Louisiana, “we tend to see more Newpath drift — that’s due to the cropping culture and rice there is planted a bit earlier. We’re just now getting to the point where a lot of soybeans are being sprayed with glyphosate.”



HERBICIDE DRIFT continues to be a problem in the Mid-South. Eric Webster, LSU AgCenter weed scientist, says in southwest Louisiana “we tend to see more Newpath drift.”

In southwest Louisiana, glyphosate damage typically tends to show up more at harvest. “If Roundup drifted on the rice behind me,” said Webster pointing to a host of research plots, “it might be visible, or might not. But when the rice began heading out, it would be more obvious with blank heads.”

There have been two recent instances of Newpath drift in Acadia Parish. Both moved close to a mile from the target field. Webster sent samples of the rice foliage from one of the drift incidents to South Dakota State University for analysis.

“Along that mile stretch were several rice fields, and I could track the drift through them. The field closest to the Newpath target showed the lowest concentration (of the product). For reference, it showed a concentration of 2.2 parts per billion. The field farthest away showed the highest concentration at 8.8 parts per billion. So a mile away, the Newpath was four times higher than a field about 150 yards away from the (spray target).”

Webster said that points to an inversion layer. The morning the spray went out, the wind was 0 to 2 miles per hour coming from the east.

“Morning is often the worst time for a herbicide application. That’s when there tend to be more inversion layers. That morning, a cooler layer of temperatures was likely at the soil surface topped by a warmer air mass that’s moving across the field. The spray gets hung up and moves with the air mass.

“In some cases, the wind can even be moving in the opposite direction to the layer on the soil. That’s been documented in the state.”

Last year, LSU AgCenter researchers began studies “on Permit on the soil surface as a pre-emergence treatment. I’ve always put Permit in with Command blanket treatments to help with nutsedge control because it has residual activity.”

For the current test, “we left out the Command to see what Permit was bringing to the system. We found it was providing some broad-spectrum grass control — barnyardgrass, sprangletop and broadleaf signalgrass. We’ve since expanded that research and now have 10 or 12 studies.

“We haven’t seen the grass control we saw last year, although it is being suppressed. I think we’ll be able to put the product out early, expand the spectrum a bit and provide a bit longer residual.”

Webster is also looking at ammonium sulfate. “We’ve always known it helps with products like Roundup. This year, we’re checking it with Ricestar.

“We always want to find a grass herbicide that we can add a broadleaf herbicide to without causing any antagonism. Our research seems to show that products like Permit and Londax will accept 2 pounds of sprayable ammonium sulfate per acre. That’s along with the grass herbicides. We may be dropping the pH of the water and helping keep the products working independently.”

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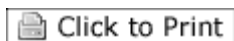
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8.25.2008 3:33 PM

## A Pesticide Alternative That Should Help Save Bees

### The Promise of Biopesticides

The Giant knotweed plant, commonly called Goliath (the scientific name is *Reynoutria sachalinensis*), can be unsightly in roadside landscapes, a noxious weed in the home landscape, but is always a favorite forage plant for honey bees. It grows primarily in the eastern U.S. and when in plentiful supply produces a mild, medium amber honey that is favored by many, especially beekeepers who get to harvest the surplus.

The plant is an aggressive invasive weed that was introduced into the U.S. several years ago as an ornamental. It is native to Japan and Korea, grows to about 12 feet tall and can grow as much as 6 inches overnight. Its huge leaves actually offer shade in the summer and are often used around homes as a screen or shade producer. Of course that shade can be problematic for other plants, and left alone, Giant Knotweed soon commands large areas of land, shading out any competitors and out competing almost any other plant for water and nutrients. It doesn't like company.

However, Pam G.Marrone, Ph.D reports on the development of a new "green" pesticide obtained from an extract of this giant knotweed plant, at the recent American Chemical Society meeting in Philadelphia. "The product is safe to humans, animals, and the environment," says Marrone, founder and CEO of Marrone Organic Innovations, Inc., in Davis, California.

The new biopesticide has active compounds that alert plant defenses to combat a range of diseases, including powdery mildew, gray mold and bacterial blight that affect fruits, vegetables, and ornamentals. The product will be available this October for conventional growers, according to Marja Koivunen, Ph.D., the director of R&D for Marrone. A new formulation has also been developed for organic farmers and will be available in 2009.

Biopesticides are derived from plants, microbes, or other natural materials and are proven to be safer for humans and the environment. The active ingredient of the company's first product came from lemongrass oil.

Synthetic pesticides dominate the \$30 billion pesticide market, but biopesticides should reach \$1 billion by 2010, about 4.25% of the global pesticide business.

One biopesticide commentator acknowledged that knotweed extract "induces phytoalexins which infer a plant's resistance to powdery mildew and other diseases such as Botrytis". In other words, the extract helps the crop or ornamental plant fight the mold rather than attacking the mold directly. When the extract is made with organic alcohol, the fungicide should be considered organic, a boon for organic growers everywhere.

Why is this important?

One problem honey bees have had in recent years is that growers are legally allowed to apply fungicides to crops in bloom because the sprays have not been shown to be harmful to adult, foraging bees. However, recent long term studies by USDA scientists in almonds have shown that these fungicides are collected and returned to the hive and stored in the pollen collected by the bees while foraging. These compounds then sit and wait to be fed to the larvae or even adults later in the season, causing problems down the line.

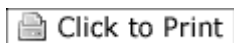
Another issue is that when certain fungicides are coupled in a tank mix with certain insecticides, the toxicity of the insecticide increases exponentially, rendering a relatively safe insecticide deadly to bees, and apparently humans.



The addition of a safe biopesticide to the market place should be welcomed by not only farmers, but beekeepers, and anyone who is responsible for the health of their crops, and the people who eat them.

Of course pesticides have not been shown to directly cause Colony Collapse Disorder. Generally, however, pesticides are bothersome, and in many cases downright deadly to honey bees and other pollinators and reducing their use for any purpose will only help. And, though not indicted directly, pesticides are suspected to be one of the elements in the environment that are stressing honey bees' immune systems, leading to a more available path for whatever the suspect pathogens are that are directly responsible for CCD. Stay tuned.

**Find this article at:** <http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/blogs/bees/bee-biopesticides-55082503>





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## TruGreen Joins EPA Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program

Last update: 6:38 p.m. EDT July 30, 2008



MEMPHIS, Tenn., Jul 30, 2008 (BUSINESS WIRE) --  
TruGreen today announced it has joined the Pesticide  
Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP), an EPA

maintained group of businesses committing to reduce the amount of pesticides entering our environment. TruGreen will join the Landscaping/Turf sector, which focuses on residential and commercial properties, public spaces and golf courses.

"TruGreen's acceptance to PESP establishes our commitment to lead the industry in the research and development of environmentally responsible products and services," said Dennis Sutton, president, TruGreen LawnCare. "We believe we have the capability, leadership support, and commitment to further improve our program offerings in line with PESP goals."

By joining PESP, organizations pledge that environmental stewardship is an integral part of their pest management approach, and they commit to working toward innovative practices that reduce risk to human health and the environment. PESP members are required to develop a goal-oriented strategy with the focus of reducing pests and pesticide risks. Each year, the EPA issues guidance to PESP members on how to develop strategies for the coming year and report their progress in reducing pesticide risk during the previous year.

"TruGreen is demonstrating its commitment to develop a strategic focus on risk reduction and has outlined specific, measurable goals that fulfill its five-year strategy," said Maggie Johnson of the US EPA. "We are pleased that industry leaders like TruGreen see the value and the importance of product stewardship, and we look forward to working with them as they continue to develop and implement an environmentally responsible strategy."

TruGreen's vision is to develop programs that meet consumer needs for a healthier, sustainable landscape, promote the environmental benefits of lawns and landscapes, and reduce overall use of pesticides. More information on how TruGreen will accomplish these goals can be found by visiting the TruGreen PESP member page.

About Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program

Launched in 1994, the Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP) is a voluntary program that forms partnerships with pesticide users to reduce the

implement pollution prevention strategies. PESP is coordinated by the Office of Pesticide Programs' Environmental Stewardship Branch. More information on PESP can be found by visiting <http://www.epa.gov/oppbpd1/pep/>.

#### About TruGreen

TruGreen(R) is the world's largest lawn and landscape company, serving more than 3.4 million residential and commercial customers across the United States with lawn care, tree and shrub care, and landscaping services. As the current industry leader, TruGreen continues to pioneer the development of new technology for lawn care, and devotes substantial resources to continually evaluate new products and equipment. TruGreen is a member of the ServiceMaster Family of Brands, which also includes TruGreen LandCare(R), Terminix(R), American Home Shield(R), ServiceMaster Clean(R), Merry Maids (R), Furniture Medic(R), and AmeriSpec(R). For more information, go to [www.servicemaster.com](http://www.servicemaster.com) or [www.trugreen.com](http://www.trugreen.com).

SOURCE: TruGreen

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# [Beyond Pesticides Daily News Blog](#)

## [Report Documents Poisonings from New Generation Pesticides](#)

(*Beyond Pesticides*, August 4, 2008) According to a new Center for Public Integrity investigation, [Perils of the New Pesticides](#), pyrethrins and [pyrethroids](#) were responsible for more than 26 percent of all major and moderate human incidents involving pesticides in the United States in 2007, up from just 15 percent in 1998 — a 67 percent increase. This is based on an analysis of adverse reaction [reports](#) filed with the Environmental Protection Agency by pesticide manufacturers.

As a result of the Center's investigation, the director of the EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs said the agency would begin a broad study of the human health effects of these chemicals this year.

"The alarming rise of pesticide-related incidents attributed to pyrethrin and pyrethroid affiliated products is a serious concern for the millions of households that use them," said Center Executive Director Bill Buzenberg. "The Center for Public Integrity uncovered this public safety issue through more than a dozen Freedom of Information Act requests and crunching the data. This should be basic public information if the EPA were doing its job."

Data from the American Association of Poison Control Centers reveals a similar trend that supports the EPA data analyzed by the Center. The number of reported pyrethrin and pyrethroid incidents to poison centers across the country jumped from 16,000 in 1998 to more than 26,000 in 2006, a 63 percent rise.

Pyrethrins, naturally-occurring compounds with insecticidal properties derived from chrysanthemum flowers, are used in commonly available household products to control insects in the home, on pets, and on people. Their synthetic counterparts, pyrethroids, have similar properties to pyrethrins, and were created as safer alternatives to an earlier class of pesticides (organophosphates), originally derived from nerve gas. Manufacturers' use of pyrethroids has grown widely to include thousands of household products, ranging from bug repellants, anti-lice shampoos, pet shampoos, and carpet cleaners.

While pyrethroids have been characterized as less toxic than organophosphates, the number of reported human health problems, including severe reactions and even deaths attributed to pesticides containing pyrethrins and pyrethroids, increased from 261 in 1998 to 1,030 in 2007, nearly a 300 percent increase. Pyrethrins and pyrethroids account for more incidents than any other class of pesticide over the last five years. EPA data shows at least 50 deaths attributed to this supposedly safer class of pesticides since 1992.

While organophosphates have been extensively studied and their impact on public health thoroughly documented, researchers and scientists are still unsure of the long-term neurotoxicity of pyrethrins and pyrethroids, particularly among children and those susceptible to allergies. Even so, the EPA does not require product warning labels cautioning consumers with allergies of the dangers associated with pyrethrins and pyrethroids products. However, the Food and Drug Administration does require warning labels on shampoos that contain pyrethrins and pyrethroids.

The Center's investigation includes an online nationwide pesticide incident database that allows anyone to search by state, city, exposure type, chemical, and product.

[The Center for Public Integrity](#) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan independent Washington, D.C.-based organization that does investigative reporting and research on significant public issues.

# Seattle Post-Intelligencer

[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420ap\\_wst\\_salmon\\_pesticides.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420ap_wst_salmon_pesticides.html)

Last updated July 30, 2008 2:53 p.m. PT

## Feds to study effect of pesticides on NW salmon

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE -- The federal government has agreed to take steps to limit how much pesticide finds its way into salmon- and steelhead-bearing streams in the Pacific Northwest and California.

The public interest law firm Earthjustice says the National Marine Fisheries Service has agreed to examine the effect of 37 common pesticides over the next four years and design measures to minimize their damage on the protected fish. The agreement settles a lawsuit brought by fishing industry and environmental groups.

The pesticides can harm fish by causing abnormal sexual development, impairing their ability to swim and by stunting their growth.

The groups say this is the first time the fisheries service has evaluated the large-scale impacts of pesticides on salmon.