



Board Agenda Item 8.1

DATE: April 8, 2025

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Paul Nerland, County Administrative Officer/Emergency Services Director

SUBJECT: Proclamation and Ratification of the Existence of a Local Emergency - Beet Leafhopper Insect in Fresno County

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Adopt Resolution proclaiming and ratifying a Local Emergency proclaimed by the Emergency Services Director on April 2, 2025 due to the migration of the Beet Leafhopper insect.

Approval of the recommended action will ensure that the local emergency status proclaimed by the Emergency Services Director on April 2, 2025 remains in effect, allowing for commercial growers to use neonicotinoid pesticides on an emergency basis on tomato crops to combat the Beet Leafhopper (BLH) insect in Fresno County. The BLH insect is the vector of Beet Curly Top Virus (BCTV), a disease known to cause serious damage to tomato crops. The areas affected are mainly in the west side of the County, but this item is countywide.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

No viable options can be identified.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no increase in Net County Cost associated with the recommended action. The recommended action is necessary to ensure the authorization for commercial growers to use neonicotinoid pesticides on tomato crops on an emergency basis to combat the BLH insect in Fresno County to prevent potentially devastating losses caused by the transmission of BCTV by the BLH.

DISCUSSION:

California Government Code, section 8630 authorizes the Director of Emergency Services, when the County Board of Supervisors is not in session, to proclaim a Local Emergency when Fresno County is threatened or likely to be threatened by conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property that are, or are likely to be, beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of this County. Fresno County Ordinance Code, Chapter 2.44, designates the County Administrative Officer as the Emergency Services Director. Pursuant to the Government Code and County Ordinance, your Board is requested to confirm the proclamation of a local emergency within seven days of the Emergency Services Director's proclamation by ratifying the proclamation and adopting the recommended resolution.

The County received evidence indicating the BLH has been detected in rapidly increasing numbers at local tomato farms, some of which have tested positive for BCTV, and it is possible that many more of these insects are in tomato farms in the County.

On April 2, 2025, the Emergency Services Director, in consultation with the Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner, proclaimed the existence of a local emergency due to the imminent infestation of the BLH. This proclamation authorizes commercial growers to use neonicotinoid pesticides on tomato crops in Fresno County on an emergency basis to combat the BLH, and to prevent widespread tomato crop failure.

The BLH currently poses an active and serious threat to both fresh market and processing tomatoes in the western side of the San Joaquin Valley. It acts as a vector of the BCTV, which stunts young plants and can result in complete loss of crops in heavily infected fields. Approximately 50% of the tomato acreage in the region is at risk of infection in years when insect and virus pressure are high. Commercial tomato growers heavily rely on neonicotinoids to combat the BLH and the BCTV, as no effective alternatives exist. Without effective control of the BLH, damage to affected tomato crops in Fresno County could be as high as 70% to 90%.

While the use of neonicotinoids on certain crops is restricted under 3 California Code of Regulations section 6990, effective January 1, 2024, an exemption in section 6990(c)(2) allows their application during a local emergency declared under Government Code section 8630. Under this exemption, commercial tomato growers must obtain written recommendations from a licensed pest control advisor and retain records of the application for at least two years.

California is the largest producer of processing tomatoes and the second largest producer of fresh tomatoes in the U.S. Fresno County is a top producer of processing tomatoes, and a significant producer of fresh tomatoes. Current data shows processing tomatoes are annually grown in California on approximately 235,000 acres, including 67,750 in Fresno County for the 2023 crop year, representing a production value of \$503,937,000.

On April 2, 2025, the County's Emergency Services Coordinator notified the State Office of Emergency Services of the Emergency Services Director's proclamation of this local emergency.

This item is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act under section 15269, which provides an exemption for emergency projects.

Fresno County Ordinance Code, Chapter 2.44 requires your Board to review the need to continue the local emergency at least once every 60 days until terminated. The local emergency must be terminated at the earliest possible date when conditions warranting the proclamation of this local emergency have ended.

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

On file with Clerk - Resolution

On file with Clerk - Proclamation of the Existence of a Local Emergency

CAO ANALYST:

Amy Ryals