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Board Protects Local Growers with Emergency Proclamation

Authorizes Action to Protect Tomato Crop Impacted by Pest

Stockton, CA – After emergency action by Chairman Miguel Villapudua last week, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors affirmed the Chair's decision to declare a local emergency due to the beet leafhopper ("BLH") and the presence of the beet curly top virus ("BCTV") on tomato crops in the County. The emergency declaration was issued on July 3, 2024 at the request of the Agricultural Commissioner, in coordination with the Directors of Emergency Services and Emergency Operations, and allows local growers the ability to use neonicotinoids to combat BLH and the risk of BCTV in local tomato crops.

"The Board of Supervisors appreciates the proactive stance of our Agricultural Commissioner to protect our valuable agricultural products and the livelihood of our growers," commented Board Chairman Miguel Villapudua. "We recognize that this \$3+ billion a year industry is the lifeblood of our community and an important part of our Valley culture. We are committed to giving our growers the tools they need to protect their crops and their businesses and the jobs that go along with them."

Fresh market and processing tomatoes are grown annually in San Joaquin County and in 2023, approximately 18,500 acres were planted, representing approximately \$147 million of annual harvested value. Since the early 1900s, curly top disease has been a known cause of serious crop damage in the San Joaquin Valley. Historically, BCTV has been known to cause significant economic damage to tomatoes in San Joaquin County. Significant damage to the tomato crop in San Joaquin County will be lessened if temporary use of neonicotinoids is permitted on an emergency basis to allow for commercial growers to treat their tomato crops for BLH in San Joaquin County.

Based on the sweeps, trapping, and confirmed detection by the UCCE Crop Advisor, it was determined that BLH has migrated into San Joaquin County and that some of the BLH population is carrying BCTV and the emergency use of neonicotinoid pesticides is necessary to combat BCTV during this growing season since no other effective means of control are available. Title 3, California Code of Regulations section 6990.6 that went into effect January 1, 2024, would have restricted the use of neonicotinoids on tomatoes. However, the law provides an exception to address a local emergency.

"As Agricultural Commissioner, I want to take all necessary steps to empower and assist our local growers in getting their products to market in a safe and effective manner," commented Kamal Bagri, San Joaquin County Agricultural Commissioner. "The new regulations from the state have this important exemption to combat threats at the local level when needed to protect our local produce and economy. With the Board action, San Joaquin County growers are now able to take effective steps to reduce and eliminate this threat to our local tomato crops."

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