

Why the pesticide scare is silly

by Marcia Merry

On March 6, the Food and Drug Administration issued a warning about when and how to refrigerate yet another food product, after a February outbreak of botulism in New York State. The outbreak hospitalized three people, and sickened many more. In this case, the FDA statement simply warned consumers that a certain brand of oil and garlic mixture—or indeed, a homemade variety, particularly those containing little or no acidifying agent such as lemon juice—should be kept refrigerated at all times.

The March botulism outbreak is one of thousands of episodes of bacterial- and mold-related food contamination that sicken millions each year. According to Dr. Sanford Miller, dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, “20 million to 40 million cases of food-borne diseases are reported on a yearly basis.”

Yet, the USDA and the EPA are currently making a big public issue over pesticides contaminating food and groundwater. The simple fact is, this is a hoax. The immediate victim of the scare is agriculture. The next victim is the American people, whose food supply and water supply are both threatened by this stupidity. The evil Conservation Foundation—which originally came into being in support of Adolf Hitler’s racial genocide policies—and other think tanks have concocted these scares in order to justify a policy of drastic depopulation and food output reduction.

As Dr. Miller also said at the November 1988 Texas Vegetable Association convention, “Public outcries about unsafe food products due to pesticides are unwarranted. . . . The issue of chemicals in our food supply creates a lot of noise and drama—but it has little content. There isn’t a single illness that has been associated with chemicals in food when those chemicals have been appropriately applied. . . . That’s where I see the main problems with food safety—with microbes or ‘bugs’ that develop with unsafe food handling and related practices.”

The map illustrates the kind of scientifically baseless propaganda that the EPA and the USDA are using to attempt to scare the general public into tolerating the destruction of farmers and the food supply. The map is from a December 1988 report by the EPA, “Pesticides in Ground Water, Data Base 1988 Interim Report,” and displays the number of different pesticides that have been identified, even in trace quantities, by state, as coming from agricultural use. This so-called survey was done in 1988 by the Public Information

Research Group, and has no scientific significance, but is published in order to feed the scare campaign.

To give a scientific gloss to this operation against modern farming, a report was published in 1987, “Regulating Pesticides in Food; the Delaney Paradox,” by the National Research Council and a specially established Committee on Scientific and Regulatory Issues Underlying Pesticide Use Patterns and Agricultural Innovation. This 272-page book forewarns that many commonly used insecticides and fungicides will be outlawed in coming months, under provisions of the Delaney Clause, a provision of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, which is the law that governs the setting of pesticide tolerances. The clause bars the EPA from granting any tolerance for a pesticide residue that has been found to induce cancer in animals and that concentrates in processed food. The conclusion? An “adjustment” will have to be made by farmers and eaters.

Many rearguard actions are currently under way to fight this hoax. One instance of an immediate threat to agriculture is seen in New York State. The state officer in Albany responsible for enforcement of field insecticide application regulations, is a former Sierra Club functionary, and a radical environmentalist. At risk of elimination are the state’s 60,000 acres of potatoes, and thousands of acres of sweet corn for commission processing by Comstock Foods, because state officials may choose to make it impossible for farmers to protect the crops from insect damage. Bird’s Eye has already left the state, citing potential supply unreliability under insecticide-use harassment.

According to the EPA map shown, New York and Minnesota have trace identifications of 14 different pesticides in groundwater from agriculture use. California, with the number 31 listed on the map, is the state with the highest number of pesticides in groundwater identified, namely 31, and also is the state which produces over 52% of all the fresh and processed vegetables eaten in the United States.

California-based scientists have produced some of the best refutations of the EPA assertion of dangers from pesticides.

The 1986 *Environmental Toxicology Newsletter* of the University of California Cooperative Extension Service reports on the work of Dr. Bruce Ames, chairman of the department of biochemistry at the University of California at Berkeley. He said, “The carcinogens and pesticide residues currently being found in California water supplies, such as in Silicon Valley, are present in extraordinary tiny amounts that, except in rare cases, are trivial relative to the background level of carcinogens in nature. Therefore, I am convinced that such water pollution is irrelevant as a cause of human cancer.

“The main current fallacy in our approach to such pollution consists in believing that carcinogens are rare and that they are mostly man-made chemicals. Quite the contrary is the case. My estimate is that over 99.9% of the carcinogens Californians ingest are from natural (e.g., substances nor-

