

# Protected Harvest's 2006 Strategy

## Strategic Approach

Protected Harvest is a non-profit organization that certifies farmer's adherence to region- and crop-specific environmental production standards, as adopted by its board of directors. Protected Harvest intends to serve as a market-based stimulus to encourage widespread adoption of commercial-scale sustainable agriculture and IPM by developing sustainable production standards, certification services, and an eco-label.

The Protected Harvest point-based certification program allows growers to be rewarded for the sustainability of their production practices, giving growers the incentive they need to grow crops with minimal pesticides and minimal environmental impact on an ongoing basis. The standards are based on the implementation of Biointensive-IPM practices, soil and water quality protection practices, and the reduction in use of high-risk, FQPA-targeted pesticides. As far as we know, Protected Harvest is the only such program to use quantifiable performance measures for the reduction of high-risk pesticides. Growers cannot exceed a maximum number of "Environmental Impact Units" (EIU) per field and are prohibited from using the most toxic of pesticides entirely.

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## Activities for the Coming Year

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### Activity 1

Protected Harvest will continue to develop the highest level of measurable IPM-based eco-standards. Standards in development for 2006 so far include: California navel oranges, and California processing tomatoes, and Pennsylvania mushrooms.

#### **How does this activity reduce pesticide risk?**

The Protected Harvest point-based production standard is based on the implementation of Biointensive-IPM practices, soil and water quality protection practices, and the reduction in use of high-risk, FQPA-targeted pesticides. In order to achieve certification, growers must implement a truly integrated program, scoring at least 70% of available practice points

#### **How will you measure the risk reduction gained from this activity?**

Through the measurement of data on IPM practices used by growers and the associated practice points, following implementation of certification programs (see Activity 2) in subsequent years.

## **Activity 2**

Protected Harvest will continue to provide quality certification services to agriculture and food industry clients. Clients that have applied for certification in 2006 include: Wisconsin potatoes, California winegrapes, California strawberries, and California treefruit (peaches, plums and nectarines).

### **How does this activity reduce pesticide risk?**

By participating in a certification program, growers will be required to document their practices, providing them with a basis for making sustainable production decisions in subsequent years. Enrolling in a certification program provides verification (through an auditing process) of practices that are otherwise anecdotal. Being able to market a product with the Protected Harvest eco-label gives growers the incentive they need to grow crops with minimal pesticides.

### **How will you measure the risk reduction gained from this activity?**

Protected Harvest expects approximately 10,000 acres to be enrolled in certification programs in 2006. Growers will supply data on production practices and pesticide use to assess progress between years and as compared to the industry baseline.

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## **Activity 3**

Protected Harvest will implement marketing activities to engage growers in the process of effectively communicating to their customers the quality and value of products grown under a certified IPM-based production program. Producers will be integrally involved in the design and execution of these communication activities, which will include developing sales tools, grower/packer sales training sessions, exhibiting at a national produce show, developing point-of-purchase marketing materials, and a grower media tour.

### **How does this activity reduce pesticide risk?**

There are many factors that affect the decision process of farmers as to whether or not to adopt the use of reduced risk pest management techniques. Among these factors is the opportunity to develop a niche market that will distinguish their product with their customers. Only with retailer awareness and support, and armed with the tools necessary to succeed in the marketplace, will more farmers actively seek to implement IPM and reduce their reliance on FQPA pesticides.

### **How will you measure the risk reduction gained from this activity?**

Success will be measured by retailer commitment to carrying certified products and an increase in acres and producers enrolled in the program. Producers will be surveyed to

document retailer commitment to carrying and promoting certified foods in their stores, and whether price premiums were achieved.

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#### **Activity 4**

Protected Harvest will compile information on the pesticide active ingredients used in crops to be certified and the common patterns of use of these materials. A Pesticide Environmental Assessment System (PEAS) index, which ranks potential environmental impact of each material, will be created for use in each crop. For 2006 Protected Harvest will be creating indices for California citrus and mushrooms in both California and Pennsylvania. Additional indices may be created as Protected Harvest obtains new clients in additional commodities. Protected Harvest will also be reviewing the existing indices for California strawberries, California winegrapes, California tree fruit and Wisconsin potatoes to account for new or changed registrations.

#### **How does this activity reduce pesticide risk?**

The PEAS index for a crop educates the grower by allowing comparison of available pesticide choices. Each active ingredient has an "environmental impact unit" score. Growers can see at a glance which materials can be expected to impact the environment the least, and make educated choices about which materials to use.

#### **How will you measure the risk reduction gained from this activity?**

The PEAS index is quantitative. A quantitative assessment can be made during the certification process (see Activity 5).

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#### **Activity 5**

Participating growers cannot exceed the maximum threshold of "environmental impact units" per acre and are prohibited from using the most toxic pesticides (often FQPA materials) entirely. During annual reviews of each commodity, thresholds can be reduced (with input from growers) to encourage further reductions in use of the higher-impact pesticides.

#### **How does this activity reduce pesticide risk?**

For each crop certified, Protected Harvest analyses data on industry pesticide use and establishes a threshold which encourages use of alternatives to FQPA pesticides and other higher-scoring materials. In 2006, Protected Harvest will review and revise the existing thresholds for California strawberries, California winegrapes, Wisconsin potatoes, and create new ones for California citrus, California tree fruit, and mushrooms in both California and Pennsylvania. Additional thresholds will be created as new commodities are added to the Protected Harvest program.

**How will you measure the risk reduction gained from this activity?**

Participating growers submit their pesticide use records to Protected Harvest. From these records, a overall score can be measured for each grower or commodity. Use of specific materials can also be measured directly from the records.