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New York Becomes Third State To Ban Brain-Damaging Pesticide

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2019



WASHINGTON – Beginning next year, a neurotoxic pesticide that at low doses can trigger brain and behavioral damage in children will be banned from use by agricultural operations in New York State.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo **has directed** the state’s Department of Environmental Conservation to take immediate steps to phase out all aerial applications of chlorpyrifos for all uses, except

spraying apple tree trunks, by December 2020. All uses of the pesticide will be banned by 2021.

The state legislature passed a bill banning the crop chemical earlier this year, but Cuomo **vetoed the measure**. He argued that he did not agree with taking such action “by legislative decree,” preferring instead to rely on the judgment of “chemists, health experts, and other subject matter experts in this field.”

New York is now the third state to take such action. California Gov. Gavin Newsom **announced a complete ban** on chlorpyrifos in October, and in 2018 **Hawaii was the first state to act**, banning all uses of the pesticide.

A **2015 analysis of federal data by EWG** found chlorpyrifos was most heavily used in Columbia, Ulster and Orange counties in upstate New York.

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The European Union announced a phaseout of chlorpyrifos on Dec. 6.

The Environmental Protection Agency was poised to implement a nationwide ban on chlorpyrifos early in 2017. But after the 2016 election, Dow launched an **aggressive campaign** to block that decision.

Dow, the pesticide’s main manufacturer, donated \$1 million to President Trump’s inauguration festivities, and its CEO met privately with then-EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. Ignoring his agency’s own scientists, Pruitt aborted the scheduled ban soon after.

Pruitt resigned in disgrace in July 2018 after a scandal-ridden 18-month tenure, but Andrew Wheeler, who took over as agency administrator, fought in federal court to keep chlorpyrifos legal.

EWG President Ken Cook said Cuomo’s move demonstrates the kind of leadership needed from elected officials to put the health and safety of children ahead of the narrow interests of the pesticide industry.

“The children of New York will be safer as a result of the decision to ban this pesticide that can cause irreversible neurological damage,” Cook said. “Chemical agribusiness may hold sway within the Trump EPA over pesticide policy, but not in those states where protecting the health of children and farmworkers is a top priority.”

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