

Contact :

Beyond Toxics: Krystal Abrams

Pollinator Projects Manager: 541-465-8860

Email: kabrams@beyondtoxics.org

<http://www.beyondtoxics.org/resources/press-kit/>



ALSO:

Friends of the Earth contact: Patrick Davis, (202) 222-0744

pdavis@foe.org

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New National Food Study finds Dangerous Pesticides in Common Family Foods

Oregon has the second highest concentration of brain-damaging pesticides in apples

EUGENE, OR. – [A new report](#) produced in cooperation with Beyond Toxics, Friends of The Earth and 12 other organizations and individuals across the U.S. found store and name brand foods contain residues of toxic pesticides linked to a range of serious health and environmental problems, including those commonly produced and sold by the top four U.S. food retailers, Kroger, Walmart, Costco and Albertsons. Eugene, Oregon was one of the locations where popular foods were purchased in 15 cities across the country to test for the presence of toxic pesticides.

The report found that tested products--oat cereals, apples, applesauce, spinach and pinto beans--contained detectable amounts of glyphosate, organophosphates and neonicotinoids. The average level of glyphosate found in cereal samples (360 parts per billion) was more than twice the level set by scientists at Environmental Working Group for lifetime cancer risk for children. The average level of glyphosate found in pinto beans (509 ppb) was more than 4.5 times the benchmark.

In **Oregon**, foods tested by Beyond Toxics, yielded similar results. The average level of glyphosate found in cereal samples gathered in Oregon (500 parts per billion) was more than 3 times the level set by scientists at Environmental Working Group for lifetime cancer risk for children. The average level of glyphosate found in pinto beans (507 ppb) was more than 4.5 times the benchmark. Out of 12 states measured in the study, Oregon had the 2nd highest concentrations of organophosphates in apples.

*"We should all be concerned that the food we are eating and feeding to our loved ones contain dangerously high levels of pesticides," said **Lisa Arkin, Executive Director of Beyond Toxics.** "The take-away here is that when pesticides are sprayed on food crops, they remain in our food and are taken into our brains, organs and blood. Not enough research has been done to determine the level of harm. Could the food you eat today be an important contributor to your chronic disease a decade later?"*

Findings of the food testing commissioned by Friends of the Earth are significant because of how common it was to find significant levels of toxic pesticides in a wide variety of non-organic foods children eat on a daily basis. Findings include:

- **Glyphosate**, a probable human carcinogen according to the World Health Organization's cancer research agency, was found on 100% of oat cereal samples and 100% of pinto bean samples tested.
- **Organophosphates**, which are so toxic to children's developing brains that scientists have [called](#) for a complete ban, were found in 100% of applesauce samples, 61% of whole apples and 25% of spinach samples, at levels ranging from 0 to 3.31 nmol/g.

- **Neonicotinoids**, which the European Union has banned due to robust science linking the chemicals to bee die-offs and which have been linked to endocrine disruption and autism spectrum disorder, were found in 80% of spinach and 73% of applesauce samples ranging from 0 to 0.14 nmol/g.

Brands tested by an independent laboratory included Great Value (Walmart), Kroger (Kroger), Signature Kitchens and Signature Select (Albertsons/Safeway). Kroger, Walmart, Albertsons and Costco control over one third of all food and beverage sales in the U.S. Friends of the Earth and over 100 organizations are [urging these companies and all food retailers](#) to phase-out toxic pesticides in their supply chains and increase offerings of organically-grown and produced foods, which do not allow the use of these, and many other, toxic synthetic pesticides.

Stacy Kraker, Director of the Oregon Organic Coalition says, *“Oregon’s organic agricultural sector serves to protect people, land and water, while increasingly contributing our State’s economic growth. Oregon consumers can make a tremendous difference to reduce their exposure to pesticides in food by buying organically grown fruits, vegetables and grains, and by supporting organic farmers and producers.”*

“Toxic pesticides are showing up in what should be some of the healthiest and most affordable foods supermarkets sell,” said **Kendra Klein, PhD, senior staff scientist at Friends of the Earth.** *“Children, farmworkers and rural communities are routinely exposed to multiple pesticides linked to cancer, learning disabilities and hormone disruption.”*

Chlorpyrifos and neonicotinoids, two of the most harmful types of pesticides found in popular brands of food are the target of 2019 legislative efforts in Oregon, work supported by dozens of businesses and organizations.

Neonicotinoids are a particularly potent family of pesticides, whose use is detrimental to bees and other pollinators. In 2018, the European Union banned neonicotinoids in order to prevent bee populations from collapsing. Chlorpyrifos, which is extremely dangerous to the farmworkers who are exposed to it, is an organophosphate, which is already banned in Hawaii, and was slated to be discontinued for use on food crops by the United States EPA. However, Scott Pruitt, the former head of the EPA, reversed the agency’s earlier decision. In 2018, the Ninth Circuit Court ruled that the EPA must ban Chlorpyrifos, but the Trump Administration has not acted, necessitating action at the state level.

Beyond Toxics page: [Food Study Shows Need For Pesticide Reform](#)

[More about the Friends Of The Earth report](#)

Beyond Toxics promotes environmental justice engagement and community-based environmental grassroots organizing to ensure environmental protection and health for all communities.