

◀ **Mark Bolda is the cane berry farm advisor who was called out to evaluate an incident of blackberry crop damage attributed to the light brown apple moth.**

Bolda declined to comment on the likelihood of change.

“That’s really being imposed by the US government, and my viewpoint is pretty local. Looking at the nation as a whole is pretty different.”

Congressman Farr Tried, Not Sure of Future

Late last year, Congressman Sam Farr delivered a petition to the USDA to delist the LBAM as a quarantine pest. His press aide described the lengthy process it must now follow.

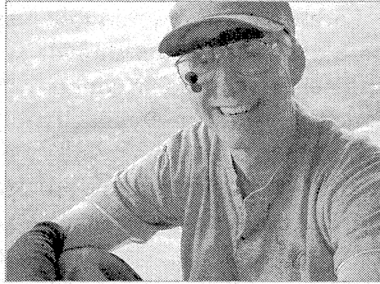
“[The petition] is currently with the National Research Council, which is part of the federal National Academies of Science. Once they complete their draft report on the petition, expected in a couple months, that report will return to Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for modification.”

Even then, the process is far from over.

“APHIS will then publish the revised conclusions in the Federal Register, which allows for public comment. Those comments will be reviewed, and the report will be further revised if warranted. APHIS will then publish its final conclusions in the Federal Register and announce its decision on the petition,” he added. “That’s the legal process for delisting a pest... Congressman Farr believes that proper science must be followed in this case, so he’s waiting for the final decision on the petition.”

Meanwhile the farmers can only wait and hope.

“That’s the part of defending agriculture that sometimes the USDA and CDEA don’t look clearly at,” concluded Cavanaugh. “They do more damage by scaring people than they do good with aggressive measures and control.” ■



▶ **Daniel Harder, director of the UCSC Arboretum, has been a frequent critic of the LBAM Program.**

leafroller,” he said.

Bolda concurred. “From what I see so far, it’s pretty comparable to orange tortrix moths... But we can handle that one, so LBAM will be just another leafroller added into the leafroller complex.”

Those control methods are not necessarily cheap. Eiskamp, who owns 225 acres of cane berry fields, said that farmers typically spray to what is called an economic level.

That is, to a point where additional sprays cost more than the damage that could be caused by the pest. Such sprays can cost up to \$100 per acre, which amounts to no small decision on the part of the grower.

They must also be coupled with in-field monitoring and education of field workers, as well as ways to trap the insects around the periphery of the fields to determine when they’re in the area.

Still, he considers that a better alternative than the current system.

Current Plan Not Working, Growers Say

Currently, the containment plan for the LBAM is monthly inspections.

“If they find one single [suspected] LBAM in any life stage, that particular ranch will be put on hold until they can

identify their find,” said Eiskamp. “It’s one strike and you’re out... The challenge is that the pest is a moth that flies in and out throughout the valley. We can only treat our own ranch, not our neighbor’s.”

As cane berries (raspberries and blackberries) are picked on a daily basis, missing a single day constitutes a major disruption.

Being stood down or a farmer’s harvest halted under quarantine for several weeks during a six to eight week harvesting cycle is potentially catastrophic. This is especially true if the quarantine is the result of a single larva.

“It can be up to half the crop,” Eiskamp pointed out. “The substantial impact can be huge.”

“Without the quarantine, would it be an issue? Probably not,” said Bolda. “But with the quarantine in place, it’s an enormous problem. The zero tolerance is well below anything we can do with integrated pest management.”

He cited the case of one small grower whose farm was shut down completely.

Farmers are hoping that relief will come in the form of downgrading the LBAM from a Class A threat. The question is whether with an increasing LBAM population, will that relief come in time?