

"The only responsible course of action is to stop the progress of this species while we can—before it does serious damage to California's agricultural economy and spreads far beyond the areas where it is today. Left unchecked, this moth could destroy more than \$2 billion worth of California crops each year."

—U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer,
March 25, 2008.

CONT. FROM 20

Louisiana crops.

Apocalypse? Not quite.

Potential disaster? Only once the moth spreads statewide and does its absolute, statistical worst, but yes, it's possible.

The Harder report is the criticism with the most scientific footing lobbed at the CDFA. The two authors journeyed to New Zealand, where the moth also invaded from the Australian continent, and found that eradication efforts in the form of pesticides wound up damaging natural predators of the moth as much as LBAM itself, and that once aggressive efforts halted, the moth population was kept in check by Mother Nature. Indeed, the largest chal-

lenge to farmers is not the moth, but the USDA quarantine on it, which requires sticky traps and other measures to also be in place, greatly adding to the cost of export. (Hawaii is also inundated with the moth, but in terms of climate, New Zealand's Nelson and Hawke's Bay regions are much closer to the Central Coast.)

The CDFA's response to the report, released on April Fool's Day, points out that LBAM has only come under control through natural means recently, after a century of infestation. "Area-wide pest detection and eradication techniques were only developed

"Since elimination of organophosphate treatments in 2001 and subsequent restoration of populations of beneficial insects and other organisms, LBAM is considered a minor pest [in New Zealand] that does not cause economically significant crop damage or have detrimental effect on native flora."

—UCSC Arboretum Director Daniel Harder and Watsonville Horticultural Consultant Jeff Rosendale, March 6, 2008.

more recently," the report reads. "Until the biocontrol organisms became established ... producers relied heavily ... on the use of insecticides as the primary means of controlling the pest." The latter statement seemingly overlooks that Harder and Rosendale explicitly talk about those insecticide efforts, and how they hampered the ability of nature to control the moth on its own.

The Health Effects

Talking to Kawamura at the Ag Week function in Monterey, it was clear that he sees the problem as a country mouse versus city mouse misunderstanding.