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Study calls for updated pesticide laws on Kauai

By - Associated Press - Saturday, March 12, 2016

LIHUE, Hawaii (AP) - A draft report on pesticides used by agribusinesses on Kauai is calling for updated pesticide regulations despite finding nothing suggesting the pesticides cause environmental harm.

The report, released Thursday, calls on state regulators to increase pesticide regulations to strengthen environmental, agricultural and health data collection, and to establish new standards for chronic, low-level exposure to pesticides. The report suggests the state Department of Agriculture earmark \$3 million for those efforts.

Despite the call the action, the Joint Fact-Finding Study Group - a team of nine Kauai residents with science backgrounds - found no substantial evidence that pesticides cause harm to flora, fauna or humans.

The group did find 11 of the approximately 20 known health conditions associated with pesticide exposures in the Kauai population and detailed five of those conditions in the report: developmental delay, ADHD, renal disease, diabetes and obesity.

The \$100,000 study was funded by the County of Kauai and Hawaii Department of Agriculture and was commissioned in early 2015.

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The report comes as pesticide critics and agriculture groups continue to clash about the use of pesticides on the island. In 2013 Fern Rosenstiel of Kapahi and others petitioned lawmakers to require Kauai farmers to better detail their pesticide use and regulate how they grow genetically modified crops.

Kauai Mayor Bernard Carvalho vetoed the resulting bill, but the veto was later overridden by the County Council.

Rosenstiel on Thursday said the study highlights the government's failures to monitor how pesticides are impacting health and how Carvalho erred when killing the initial bill.

"This study came from the mayor who vetoes our bill," Rosenstiel said. "I'm relieved to see that his own team found that we're not lying. Lawmakers can't stand idly by while our community is poisoned by pesticides."

But for agribusinesses, the report serves as proof that their practices are safe.

"(The report) should reassure residents of Kauai that there are no serious environmental or human health concerns connected to the use of pesticides by seed companies," said Bennette Misalucha, executive director of the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association, in a statement.

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