

From Banning to Tracking: Why California's PFAS Pesticide Law Matters

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California has taken another step in its effort to address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), commonly known as “forever chemicals.” On September 29, 2026, Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation requiring the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to identify and track agricultural pesticides containing PFAS through the state's public pesticide-use reporting system.

The law stops short of restricting PFAS-containing pesticides. An earlier version of the bill would have prohibited regulators from approving new pesticides containing PFAS, but lawmakers ultimately adopted a reporting and monitoring framework instead.

For manufacturers, distributors, growers, and other stakeholders, the significance of the law may lie not in what it does today, but where it could lead tomorrow.

From Proposed Ban to Tracking Requirement

The bill changed considerably as it moved through the legislative process.

As introduced, the legislation would have limited the approval of new agricultural pesticides containing PFAS. Supporters argued additional safeguards were needed to address growing concerns surrounding PFAS, while agricultural interests worried about the potential impact on growers and the availability of crop-protection products.

Lawmakers ultimately settled on a narrower approach. Rather than limiting PFAS-containing pesticides, the legislation directs regulators to identify those products in California's public pesticide-use database and track usage trends over time.

Agriculture Joins the PFAS Debate

The legislation is also notable because it brings agriculture more directly into ongoing discussions surrounding PFAS.

Over the past several years, lawmakers and regulators have increasingly focused on PFAS in consumer products, food packaging, firefighting foam, drinking water, and manufacturing operations. Agricultural pesticides have generally received less attention than these areas.

As a result, the legislation expands California's PFAS-related reporting efforts to the agricultural sector, bringing another category of products within the scope of the state's broader PFAS data-collection efforts.

Why It Matters

California already maintains one of the most comprehensive pesticide-use reporting systems in the country. Incorporating PFAS information into that system will provide regulators and the public with a more detailed picture of where and how PFAS-containing pesticides are used.

Because the state already collects and publishes substantial pesticide-use data, the legislation builds on an existing reporting framework rather than creating an entirely new regulatory program. As a result, the law may provide

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additional information regarding PFAS-containing pesticides while relying on infrastructure already familiar to regulators and industry participants.

The reporting framework may also become relevant to environmental research, risk-management assessments, and PFAS-related litigation. Although the law itself creates no new causes of action, publicly available information often becomes an important resource in evaluating emerging issues.

Looking Ahead

California's new law is unlikely to be the final word on PFAS-containing pesticides. Rather, it establishes a framework that will allow regulators, industry participants, researchers, and other stakeholders to better understand how those products are used across California agriculture.

As information becomes available through the state's reporting system, stakeholders will have a clearer picture of the role PFAS-containing pesticides play within one of the world's largest agricultural markets. Whether that information identifies meaningful usage trends, raises new policy questions, or simply provides greater visibility into existing practices remains to be seen.

For now, the legislation reflects California's decision to prioritize information gathering over immediate restrictions. As implementation begins, attention will likely shift from the legislation itself to the data it generates and how that information informs future discussions regarding the use of PFAS in agriculture.

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