

Trump EPA hands citrus growers a parting gift—aldicarb and streptomycin

Agency allows use of pesticide and antibiotic to fight citrus greening and canker diseases

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In the rush to register new pesticides before the end of Donald J. Trump's presidency, the US Environmental Protection Agency gave citrus growers a couple of [new options](#) to help combat citrus greening and canker—two diseases that the EPA says have led to \$1.75 billion in losses over the past decade.

One of the options is aldicarb, an older carbamate insecticide that the [EPA declared in 2010](#) “may pose unacceptable dietary risks, especially to infants and young children.” Aldicarb and its degradation products are neurotoxic and can contaminate groundwater.

In light of the EPA's 2010 health assessment, the sole manufacturer of the pesticide at the time, Bayer CropScience, agreed to stop selling it in the US by 2014 and end its use on citrus immediately. But in 2011, the EPA gave the green light to another company, AgLogic, to market aldicarb in the US for use on a few crops, including cotton and sweet potatoes. Now, [the EPA has agreed](#) to allow AgLogic to sell aldicarb for use on up to 100,000 acres of oranges and grapefruits in Florida until April 30, 2023.

The other tool that the Trump EPA gave citrus growers is the antibiotic streptomycin, which is a critical medicine for treating bacterial infections in humans. The agency will allow growers nationwide to use the antibiotic on all commercial citrus until Jan. 12, 2028.

Many environmental groups and public health officials are concerned that use of antibiotics in agriculture will accelerate the development of bacteria that are [resistant to antibiotics](#).

“The science of resistance is evolving and there is a high level of uncertainty in how and when resistance occurs,” the EPA says in its [Jan. 12 registration decision](#). The agency

imposed restrictions, such as preventing spray drift and requiring additional protection for pesticide handlers, to reduce the potential for antibiotic resistance.

“These reckless approvals will harm children and farmworkers and further hamper our ability to combat major public health crises,” Nathan Donley, a senior scientist at the environmental group Center for Biological Diversity, says in a [statement](#). “The Biden administration must immediately reverse these dangerous, immoral decisions by Trump appointees untethered from science and reality.”