

# **Sacramento Valley Basinwide Air Pollution Control Council Conditional Rice Straw Burning Program**

## ***2010 Disease Evaluation Protocol***

*Approved by the Sacramento Valley Basinwide Air Pollution Control Council  
August 6, 2010*

### Background

As part of the Sacramento Valley Basinwide Air Pollution Control Council's Conditional Rice Straw Burning Program ("Program"), pursuant to California Health and Safety Code 41865(e), the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners are required to generally assess the prevailing levels of qualifying rice diseases (stem rot, aggregate sheathspot, blast) once every five years to certify there are adequate disease levels in the fields to justify 25 percent burning. This first year that this new process will take place is 2010.

After the adoption of the Conditional Rice Straw Burning Program by the Sacramento Valley Basinwide Air Pollution Control Council ("Basinwide Council") in 2001, there were four consecutive years of intensive inspections--the first two years by trained growers and pest control advisors and the next two by agricultural commissioners. The findings from these years of inspections proved that there was plenty of disease everywhere to support 25 percent burning in all counties. Therefore, the Program was amended to require the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners, commencing in 2010, to generally assess the levels of disease to make sure that no significant reductions in those levels have occurred over the previous five years. The Program left open the details of what the protocol would require but referenced elements to be used including the following:

- Field Inspections
- Literature Review
- Discussion with growers, technical experts, the University of California, the California Dept of Food & Agriculture and California Rice Commission

### 2010 Basinwide Council Deliberations

At its June 17, 2010 publicly noticed meeting, the Basinwide Council's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) conferred with a representative of the California Rice Commission and two of the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners representing approximately 40-45 percent of rice acreage in the Sacramento Valley. As a result, the TAC elected to recommend a protocol to the Basinwide Council that could potentially eliminate the need to actual field sampling depending upon certain points of technical discovery resulting from consultation with recognized disease and rice agronomy experts.

The 2010 Rice Disease Evaluation Protocol is as follows:

## **2010 Rice Disease Evaluation Protocol**

### **Step 1: Initial Consultation with University Experts**

Hold a meeting or conference call for the purpose of enabling the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners to consult with University of California, Davis, Extension Rice Farm Advisors about their general observations of the prevalence of qualifying rice diseases in the Sacramento Valley. The UC Rice Farm Advisors are chosen for this role because they are deemed by the Basinwide Council to be the most familiar with both rice fields and the disease pathology. Therefore, the Basinwide Council considers them to be the best source of general qualitative disease assessment information over the past five years.

Subjects discussed during the call will include any new fields inspections and/or new literature related to disease prevalence. Using this protocol, the next possible sampling would not occur until 2015 and every five years thereafter. At least one representative from the California Department of Food and Agriculture would be invited to participate in this consultation.

If, after this initial consultation, all Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners are satisfied that adequate disease levels persist, then Step 2 is implemented as the final action of the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners to address this 2010 requirement. In contrast, if not all Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners are satisfied that adequate levels persist, then Step 2 is bypassed and the Step 3 procedure is implemented.

### **Step 2: Consultative Findings (if elected)**

The Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners, in continued consultation with the UC Rice Farm Advisors will draft and submit a letter to the Basinwide Council explaining their findings. The letter will include a summary of the general observations/professional judgment of the UC Rice Farm Advisors on the matter and will serve as the basis of the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners' required action to qualify the counties for no more than 25 percent annual burning over the next five years.

### **Step 3: Final Sampling Procedure Development (if needed)**

If, after consultation with the UC Rice Farm Advisors, the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners' are not convinced that adequate disease levels can be reasonably confirmed by the observations of the regional technical experts without new assessment activity, then the California Rice Commission will work with the Basinwide Council to

develop, propose and implement an inspection strategy to conduct a certain number of actual field inspections based upon the amount of acres in each county. The Basinwide Council's TAC is authorized to approve the strategy.

**Step 4: Field Inspection Findings (if needed)**

Upon complete implementation of the ultimate inspection procedures developed and approved by the TAC in accordance with Step 3, the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners will draft and submit a letter to the Basinwide Council explaining their findings. The letter will generally describe the finding of the field inspection procedure and will serve as the basis of the Sacramento Valley Agricultural Commissioners' required action to qualify the counties for no more than 25 percent annual burning over the next five years.