



**Immediate Release:
August 4, 2006**

Contact:
Danielle Grabiell
Environmental Investigation Agency
daniellegrabiell@eia-international.org
202-483-6621

Strawberries Linked to Skin Cancer as Monterey Bay Strawberry Festival Approaches

WASHINGTON, DC — Citing recent unprecedented thinning of the Earth's protective ozone layer and rising skin cancer rates in the U.S., conservationists are using the Monterey Bay Strawberry Festival as an opportunity to call for an urgent end to the use of methyl bromide, an ozone layer-destroying pesticide used in vast quantities by the California strawberry industry.

Methyl bromide is an acutely powerful, ozone layer-destroying chemical that does most of its damage in a very short period of time. Because of methyl bromide's significant short-term impact on the ozone layer, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is calling on the California Strawberry Commission to commit to an aggressive schedule to completely phase out its use.

"Methyl bromide presents the single greatest threat to the ozone layer over the next 5-10 years, when the ozone layer is expected to be at its thinnest level to date," said EIA campaigner Danielle Grabiell.

The ozone layer protects life on Earth from harmful ultraviolet radiation. Children are most vulnerable to elevated levels of radiation from ozone thinning. Childhood skin cancer incidence in the United States has more than doubled in the last two decades, while U.S. skin cancer rates are increasing by 3% a year, according to the American Cancer Society. In the U.S., skin cancer kills one American every hour.

Conservative estimates by leading scientists indicate that the immediate ozone depleting impact of the methyl bromide consumed just by U.S. agriculture is greater than that of the global consumption of any other ozone depleting chemical.

"The California Strawberry Commission and other agricultural interests like to talk about the health benefits of eating strawberries, but conveniently ignore the health and environmental impacts of their excessive consumption of methyl bromide," Grabiell continued.

--more--

Editor's Notes:

- EIA is an independent, non-governmental organization, based in Washington, DC, committed to investigating and exposing environmental crimes around the world. In May 2006, the US Environmental Protection Agency awarded EIA the Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award for its work in combating the illegal trade in ozone depleting chemicals. EIA has been actively tracking the global illegal trade in ozone depleting substances since the mid-1990s to provide information to the Montreal Protocol and other relevant bodies.
- The Montreal Protocol was agreed on January 1, 1987, and is now ratified by 188 countries. Under the Montreal Protocol and its amendments, ozone depleting substances are to be reduced and eliminated through the development of chemical substitutes and alternative manufacturing processes (elimination is the final objective). Methyl bromide was scheduled to be phased out in 2005 in developed countries, but the U.S. has taken advantage of a treaty loophole to continue using excessive quantities of methyl bromide beyond the phase out date.
- The EU, Japan and most developing countries oppose excessive U.S. demands to continue using methyl bromide past phase out. There are proven alternatives to methyl bromide that are being used worldwide, and in the United States.

###