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A banner advertisement for Exchange Bank. On the left, the text "Buy? Refi?" is written in a large, bold, blue font. Below it is a blue button with the text "More Info" in white. To the right of the text is the Exchange Bank logo, which consists of the letters "EB" in white on an orange square background, followed by the words "Exchange Bank" in blue. Further right is a small logo for "Equal Housing Lender" with the text "MEMBER FDIC" below it. On the far right is an illustration of a two-story house with a chimney and a garage.

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# USDA drops list of pesticide usage

## Farmers, consumer advocates have relied on data since 1990

By GARANCE BURKE  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

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FRESNO -- Consumers lost a key source of information about what's sprayed on their food on Wednesday, the last day the government published a long-standing national survey that tracks the amount of pesticides used on everything from corn to apples.

Despite opposition from scientists, the nation's largest farming organizations and environmental groups, the U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed Wednesday it plans to do away with the program.

Since 1990, farmers and consumer advocates have relied on the agency's detailed annual report to learn which states apply the most pesticides and where bug and weed killers are most heavily sprayed.

Joe Reilly, an acting administrator at the National Agricultural Statistics Service, said the program was cut because the agency could no longer afford to spend the \$8 million the survey sapped from its \$160 million annual budget.

"Unless new funds are made available, there's not much that we can do," Reilly said.

While the agency "hates eliminating any report that is actually needed out in the American public," he said consumers could find similar data from private sources.

Still, only a handful of the major agricultural chemical companies spend the approximately \$500,000 it costs to buy a full set of the privately collected data each year, according to a letter written by an advisory committee to the agency.

Most farmers can't afford to pay for the information, even if they need it to plan for the pesticides they'll apply.

Eliminating the program "will mean farmers will be subjected to conjecture and allegations about their use of chemicals and fertilizer," said Don Lipton, a spokesman for the American Farm Bureau. "Given the historic concern about chemical use by consumers, regulators, activist groups and farmers, it's probably not an area where lack of data is a good idea."

Pesticide companies also rely on the program when they're looking to reregister agricultural chemicals, said Beth Carroll, a senior stewardship manager with Syngenta Crop Protection, Inc.

And environmental groups use it to analyze which chemicals could turn up in local water supplies or endanger critical species.

In 2003, the Natural Resources Defense Council used the federal survey to prepare a suit against the EPA, claiming the government failed to assess whether the common herbicide atrazine threatened the survival of endangered Chesapeake Bay sea turtles, endangered Texas salamanders and 16 other aquatic species. The case was settled in 2006.

Reilly said the agency would "love to reinstate the program," but said for now it will only do key surveys such as the monthly crop report, which influences commodity prices on the futures market and livestock reports, which set the price for hogs and cattle.

At a time when consumers are increasingly curious about what goes into their food, farmers, chemical companies and advocacy groups said the cuts would have wide-ranging impacts.

"What we'll end up doing is understanding pesticide use through getting accident reports," said Steve Scholl-Buckwald, managing director at the San Francisco nonprofit Pesticide Action Network.

"And that's a lousy way to protect public health."

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A promotional banner for The Palazzo Las Vegas. On the left is the hotel's logo, a large 'P' with 'THE PALAZZO' and 'LAS VEGAS' below it. The main text reads 'SUITES FROM \$199/PER NIGHT' and 'DISCOVER THE NEW HEIGHT OF LAS VEGAS LUXURY'. A yellow 'RESERVE NOW' button is on the right. A photograph of a hotel suite is on the far right.

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