



February 19, 2019

The Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks Committee  
411A J.A. Cherberg Bldg.  
P.O. Box 40466,  
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

The House Environment & Energy Committee  
231A John L. O'Brien Building  
P.O. Box 40600,  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

*Re: HB 1611 and SB 5626, Acts to allow imidacloprid for shellfish cultivation*

Dear Members of the Committees:

PCC Community Markets, a locally-owned grocery retailer, is opposed to HB 1611 and SB 5626, and the bills' aims of allowing the use of a highly toxic and broad-spectrum neonicotinoid insecticide, imidacloprid, in our waterways and aquatic habitats. We are also opposed to the delegation of the Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE)'s water quality permitting authority concerning pesticide use for shellfish cultivation to the Washington Department of Agriculture.

As the nation's largest co-op grocery retailer with 11 stores and more than \$275 million in revenue, PCC Community Markets has dedicated our triple bottom line business to providing local, organic and sustainable food to Washington state residents. Our shoppers care about the environment and how their food is grown, raised and harvested. Our shoppers also care about what can be done to reduce the harmful impacts of our food system based on the best-available science.

Shellfish cultivation and the marine habitat of which it is a part are no exception. This is why PCC sources its clams and oysters from Hama Hama, a family run shellfish farm based in Lilliwaup, Washington, that does not use toxic pesticides.

We cannot shun scientific evidence and make myopic decisions for the short-term benefit of one industry. As a state we must learn from our mistakes,<sup>1</sup> examine the science, and look down the road toward the long-term impacts of our proposed actions. This is exactly what WDOE did when it conducted an extensive environmental review of the proposed use of imidacloprid on shellfish farms,

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<sup>1</sup> For decades, certain oyster growers in Willapa Bay used the insecticide carbaryl to attack burrowing shrimp. Carbaryl was disallowed in 2012 and is found to be a likely human carcinogen by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



including the assessment of 8,000 public comments and review of hundreds of new scientific data and research on neonicotinoid pesticides.

After this extensive review, WDOE concluded that the application of imidacloprid could not meet Washington's environmental sediment and water quality protection laws. Here are the reasons:

- Significant, unavoidable impacts to sediment quality and benthic invertebrates.
- Negative impacts to juvenile worms and crustaceans in areas treated with imidacloprid and nearby areas covered by incoming tides, including high mortality for Dungeness crabs.
- Negative indirect impacts to fish and birds caused by killing sources of food and disrupting the food web.
- Concern about non-lethal impacts to invertebrates in the water column and sediment.
- A risk of impacts to invertebrates from imidacloprid even at low concentrations.
- Increased uncertainty about long-term, non-lethal, and cumulative impacts.<sup>2</sup>

The proposed bills not only seek to dismiss these scientific findings, but also remove the authority of WDOE to evaluate any future water quality permitting requests concerning pesticide use in shellfish cultivation. This is unacceptable.

We understand that shellfish farming is a complicated environmental topic, given that expansion of oyster and other shellfish farms means the conversion of natural tidelands, potential disruption of native species and habitats, and other forms of pollution, such as plastics.<sup>3</sup> As a grocer, we also understand the demand and need for shellfish supplies as food.

Cultivation of shellfish, however, can be achieved through sustainable methods that do not require the application of systemic neurotoxins to the already threatened aquatic environment. For example, some cultivators grow shellfish directly on the tide beds, foregoing the use of plastic gear and pesticides.<sup>4</sup> Others use mechanical methods (like harrowing) to draw out shrimp for consumption by their natural predators: fish, including valued species like salmon and herring.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Burrowing Shrimp Control (Imidacloprid), Wa. Dept. of Ecology, <https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Permits-certifications/Aquatic-pesticide-permits/Burrowing-shrimp-control-imidacloprid>; see also Recommendation to deny Sediment Impact Zone applications as impacts of the discharge prohibit Sediment Impact Zone authorization and cannot be addressed via permit conditions, Wa. Dept. of Ecology, Sept. 13, 2018 <https://ecology.wa.gov/DOE/files/85/850006b9-6c82-4230-810c-28a543305402.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> See Shellfish Aquaculture in the Pacific Northwest, Center for Food Safety, [https://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/shellfish\\_fact-sheet\\_final\\_68919.pdf](https://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/shellfish_fact-sheet_final_68919.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*



PCC believes that Washington is a leader in listening to the science and finding innovative solutions to problems facing the food system industry and the environment. Washington must maintain this leadership and oppose *HB 1611* and *SB 5626*.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Submitted respectfully,

Aimee Simpson  
Director of Product Sustainability