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Oct 25, 2016

Governor Nikki Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

Although this may not occur in SC, I was distressed to learn that repurposed sewage, typically called "biosolids," may be used on the food we eat.

Hundreds of thousands of tons of sewage sludge are spread each year on America's forests and agricultural lands. This is commonly done with great secrecy. If you want to know where it has been dumped, in at least one state, you have to drive to the state capitol and ask for files. You can only view the files; they can't be photocopied. Somebody is working very hard to prevent the public from knowing which farms or forests contain this sludge.

Sewage sludge is just what it sounds like--municipal sewage that has been processed to obtain "clean" water, leaving behind a concentrated sludge full of contaminants. This used to be dumped into the ocean until the practice was banned in 1988 because it was too toxic.

Sewage sludge is often riddled with pharmaceutical drugs and personal care products containing endocrine disruptors that interfere with hormones such as thyroid, estrogen, and testosterone. Contaminants can persist in the soil for decades if not longer.

The sheer volume of contaminants presents researchers with significant challenges. High concentrations of brominated flame retardants are found in sludge, including 209 polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs). Each has its own toxicology, and the toxicity of combinations hasn't even been considered. Research shows that PBDEs cause thyroid hormone disruption, delayed puberty, learning impairments, and behavioral changes, and other toxicities in animals.

Sewage sludge also contains polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). PCBs were banned in 1979 because of their extreme toxicity to humans and the environment. Among other things, they cause cancer and birth defects. There are also 209 versions of these chemicals, each with its own toxicity.

And the list goes on. Pharmaceutical drugs, including birth control pills and heart medications, heavy metals, pesticides, and every kind of industrial toxin you can think of is concentrated in sewage sludge.

As your constituent, I urge you to disallow the use of biosolids/sewage sludge on crops in our state. At the very least, there should be transparency about where it is being dumped, and there should be studies commissioned to determine the long-term effects of current practices.

Sincerely,

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