SAMPLE RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR PRODUCE STUDY

To Sampling Sites and Volunteers

Air quality in Sonoma County has been significantly impacted by the ongoing fires in the region. Local farms have played a significant role in food relief efforts immediately following the start of the fires and the mass evacuations. Many farmers, backyard gardeners, and others in the community are concerned about how the air pollution might be impacting the produce or soil.

Community organizations are collaborating to collect samples from local farms of washed and unwashed produce (focusing on kale, collards, chard, and lettuce), in order to shed more light on these questions. This is a community-based and community-driven research effort.

We will be examining:

- What, if any, air pollutants have been deposited on crops on local farms?
- Can these pollutants be washed off, or are they absorbed into plant tissue?
- How much of these air pollutants might be ingested by those eating local produce?

Based on these samples and lab results, we will be able to explore questions such as:

- What are the risks from ingestion of crops grown near recent fires?
- How do these risks compare to exposures due to inhalation?
- How does this risk compare to the risk of health impacts from conventionally-grown produce and processed foods, which are also highly exposed to a different set of chemical contaminants?
- What are the benefits of locally-grown fresh produce for the community resilience to this disaster?

We are **seeking farms and gardens** where we can take produce samples, and we are **seeking volunteers** to help us collect these samples.

We will be using your GPS location to mark your site on a map displaying all samples and their distance from the fires, but we will keep your farm's name and contact information confidential. We will continue to follow-up and engage closely with you to share our results, and to collaborate on any next steps or responses that are needed based on what we find. It may be several months after sampling until we have findings available to share, and it is not yet clear how useful this information will be for advising

local growers. We encourage you to contact UC Cooperative Extension for your region for more comprehensive advice for the immediate future.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Background research for this study was conducted on the health impacts of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) from traffic-related air pollution on lettuce grown in urban agriculture. This unpublished literature review suggests that:

- Some PAHs can be absorbed into plant tissue, and so cannot be simply washed off the surface of the leaf
- The health risk from eating these PAHs is small in comparison to risks from breathing them, and far below EPA's level of concern for lifetime cancer risks
- The health benefit of eating local nutritious green leafy vegetables likely outweigh negligible impacts
- There is little research on the cumulative impacts of air pollution on produce
- Supporting local farmers strengthens local communities

The full text of this research is available upon request. This background risk assessment research was completed for a Masters of Public Health final project in the Spring of 2016 at UC Berkeley. Please note that this was only one class of chemicals amidst the hundreds of chemicals that are currently circulating in Sonoma and Napa counties due to the wildfires, and only one type of produce.

FOR VOLUNTEERS

Thank you for volunteering with this community research initiative at this sensitive time. As a citizen science project, this study depends on you, and in return, we are committed to staying in touch with you about the results from this study and next steps we can take as a community.