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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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**‘Dirty Dozen’ report irresponsible and unscientific**

Consumers can be assured that conventionally grown fruit and vegetables are safe to eat, despite the alarmist claims of a new report from the pro-organics movement.

“The latest Dirty Dozen report is unscientific and misrepresents the facts,” said Graeme Peters, chief executive of Agcarm.

The most damaging point made in the Dirty Dozen is that there are dangerous levels of pesticides in fruit and vegetables that can directly and negatively affect our health.

This is the opposite of the truth.

“Crop protection products are all thoroughly and repeatedly reviewed for safety and the mere detection of residues does not affect the safety of food,” says Graeme.

Crop protection products are regulated twice –the Environmental Protection Authority examines their impact on humans and the environment, while residues in food are regulated by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). These products are only approved for use if they pose no greater risk to consumers than foods grown without their use, according to the MPI.

Consuming the amounts of produce required to ingest anything close to a dangerous amount of pesticide is impossible.

Residue levels in fruit and vegetables are in the margins of, in most cases, the limits of science’s ability to even detect it. It’s a minuscule amount, which doesn’t deny that there is some pesticide exposure, but it is, in the vast majority of instances, not representative of any possible health concerns from consuming a normal amount of fruits and vegetables. Maximum residue limits are set by the MPI at levels well below those known to have any possible adverse health effect.

The latest Dirty Dozen mischievously puts grapes in number one position, claiming that 98 percent of samples had pesticide residues.

The fact is that the most recent results from the MPI’s food residue surveillance programme tested 24 batches of grapes for 59 substances.

MPI detected 111 residues across 1,416 possible detections (less than 10 percent). None of the detections was a breach of the extremely low maximum residue limits which are linked to good agricultural practice.

Indeed, the press release which accompanied the MPI data said that the ministry had identified “no health or food safety concerns”.

Yes, grapes contain residues of some pesticides. But these residues are at extremely low levels, with the largest residue detected across more than 1,400 tests still at a safe level over a lifetime of consumption. This is hardly justification for tainting grapes with a ‘Dirty Dozen’ label.

To suggest that eating organic food is the only alternative is not credible. Organic food also contains residues of pesticides, as there are many organic-approved pesticides that organic growers use to produce those crops.

The authors of The Dirty Dozen need to recognise that there is no value in seeking to promote organics by misrepresenting the facts around conventional agriculture.

What's most important is that consumers get the required five to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. The decision to buy organic or conventional foods is a personal choice and pesticide residues are not something that should factor into it.

See also:

- <http://www.foodsmart.govt.nz/whats-in-our-food/chemicals-nutrients-additives-toxins/agricultural-production/>

## **About Agcarm**

Agcarm is the industry association which represents crop protection, animal health and rural supplier businesses. Agcarm members distribute and sell the majority of veterinary medicines and crop protection products in New Zealand. Agcarm members promote responsible use of products right through the product life cycle, from research to disposal.