

# Water from oil production is perfectly safe

**David Ansolabehere and Brian Bedwell, Sacramento Bee, 7-19-16**

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Californians are known for their dedication to safe, fresh produce. So the media provides a steady stream of information regarding the state of the industry.

However, false information is able to travel quickly when residents take outspoken fiction as fact – which is happening with recent concerns regarding the use of recycled water from oil production for agricultural irrigation (“[Stop farmers from using oil wastewater on crops](#),” Viewpoints, July 15).

Producing each barrel of oil naturally generates about 15 barrels of “produced” water. Furthering California’s legacy of innovation, we are capturing that water, recycling it and reusing it.

With our high standards for environmental protection, produced water is highly regulated. It is filtered, treated, monitored and blended with other ground and surface water before it is provided to farmers to irrigate crops. Produced water is tested monthly and results are reported to the state’s [Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board](#).

However, the safety of produced water, and as a result, the quality of California fresh fruits and vegetables, has been questioned by activists who have been spreading unsupported claims. They have even falsely connected hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, to produced water. Yet no water from this practice is used for agricultural irrigation.

During this historic drought, Californians are searching for new ways to conserve and recycle every ounce of water, as mandated by Gov. Jerry Brown. Because of the continued demand for produced water, the Regional Water Board has established a food safety panel to further evaluate produced water and make recommendations on additional testing and regulations.

As part of this process, Cawelo Water District, which relies on produced water to augment limited state supplies, hired a third-party environmental toxicologist to study water quality, focusing on more than 70 organic compounds. The analysis found that any compounds were well within safe drinking water standards – stricter than what is necessary for irrigation water.

The toxicologist also oversaw preliminary crop testing and found that crops irrigated with produced water had the same general chemical composition as those grown with other water supplies.

Going forward, the logical and responsible approach is to reaffirm these results with regular testing. Cawelo is now required to submit results for an expanded list of more than 160 compounds. And the district is well underway in a robust sampling of a variety of crops; test results on citrus and select row crops should be out shortly.

We’re committed to making this process open and transparent to ensure that Californians are armed with science-based facts and able to make informed decisions, rather than relying on unsubstantiated rumors.