



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI**  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE – BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY**  
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**Spell Secures Diuron Products for Catfish Farmers**

Mississippi Agriculture Commissioner Lester Spell has announced approval by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of an emergency exemption on three diuron-based herbicides that will help Mississippi producers control blue-green algae in catfish ponds this year.

**Direx 4L, Karmex XP and Karmex DF**, the aforementioned products, are manufactured by Griffin LLC. These herbicides are formulated to selectively target blue-green algae, the primary pest responsible for off-flavor in catfish. The exemption will expire Nov. 1, 2006.

“The availability of diuron products for pond management is vital to sustaining the health of Mississippi’s catfish industry,” Spell said.

Statistics released by the Mississippi State University Extension Service indicate the importance of the catfish industry to the state’s economy. Farm-raised catfish ended 2005 with an estimated value of \$272 million.

Catfish producers must balance their need to control blue-green algae with the desire to preserve other pond plants that provide oxygen and keep water clean. Several copper-based algicides registered for use in catfish ponds have the potential to kill beneficial plants as well as non-beneficial plants in the ponds because the products are non-selective.

Blue-green algae release a chemical compound known as MIB (2-methylisoborneol) into pond water. Catfish absorb MIB into their bloodstream as water passes through the gills. The compound travels through the blood and is deposited into the flesh of the fish. A low concentration of the substance can give the flesh a musty or muddy off-flavor. The resulting off-flavor hinders the marketability of the fish to consumers. While catfish can purge MIB from their bodies, producers incur considerable costs holding affected fish in the ponds for several weeks for this process to complete.

The department has authority under Section 18 of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) to obtain an emergency exemption for a non-labeled use of a pesticide if the following criteria apply:

1. Significant losses of an agricultural commodity are likely.
2. Alternative, registered products are not available or effective.

The department administers the provisions of emergency exemptions through the Bureau of Plant Industry. Catfish producers can call the Bureau toll-free at 1-888-257-1285 or (662) 325-3390 for more information.

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