

Impact of Eye Gnats on Farming in San Diego County

Eric Larson

San Diego County Farm Bureau



New Issues for Farmers

- Business distraction
- Changes in cultural practices
- Additional labor
- Production disruption
- Installation of mechanical controls
- Financial burden



Business Distraction

- Farming is a challenge in its own right
 - Labor management
 - Planting, production, and harvesting
 - Marketing
 - Pest and disease control
 - Rising cost of doing business
 - Regulatory obligations
- None can be put aside while dealing with eye gnats
- Management's attention will be diverted from the core business of farming



Cultural Practices

- Techniques developed over years of research and trial and error may have to be changed
- Production techniques are often specific to that farm alone, so not simply changed
- Designed for peak efficiency and maximum production on that site
- Eye gnat control can disrupt a successful process developed through significant investment of time and resources



Cultural Practice Examples

- Change in cultural techniques
 - Planting style
 - Use of organics to be added to the soil
 - Irrigation practices
- Additional tractor passes through the field
 - Cutting, drying, and tilling of organics
 - Can't move all soil in a single pass to create planting mounds



Production Disruption

- Fallowing
 - Skip or delay planting cycle
 - Could miss good growing season
- Land lost to trap crops
- Time lost between crop rotations
 - Waiting for drying
 - Additional time to work field
- Possible crop change
- Possible loss of organic certification



Installing Mechanical Controls

- Traps
 - Not available off-the-shelf
 - Require regular maintenance
 - Purchase of new equipment to service traps
- Flight barriers
 - Need substantial support
 - Subject to wind damage
- Trap crop
 - New crop to take care of
 - Have to spray with conventional pesticides



Financial Burden

- Increased labor costs
- Decrease in production
- Cost of mechanical controls
- Lost opportunities
- Fuel and equipment costs
- Increased expense/decreased income