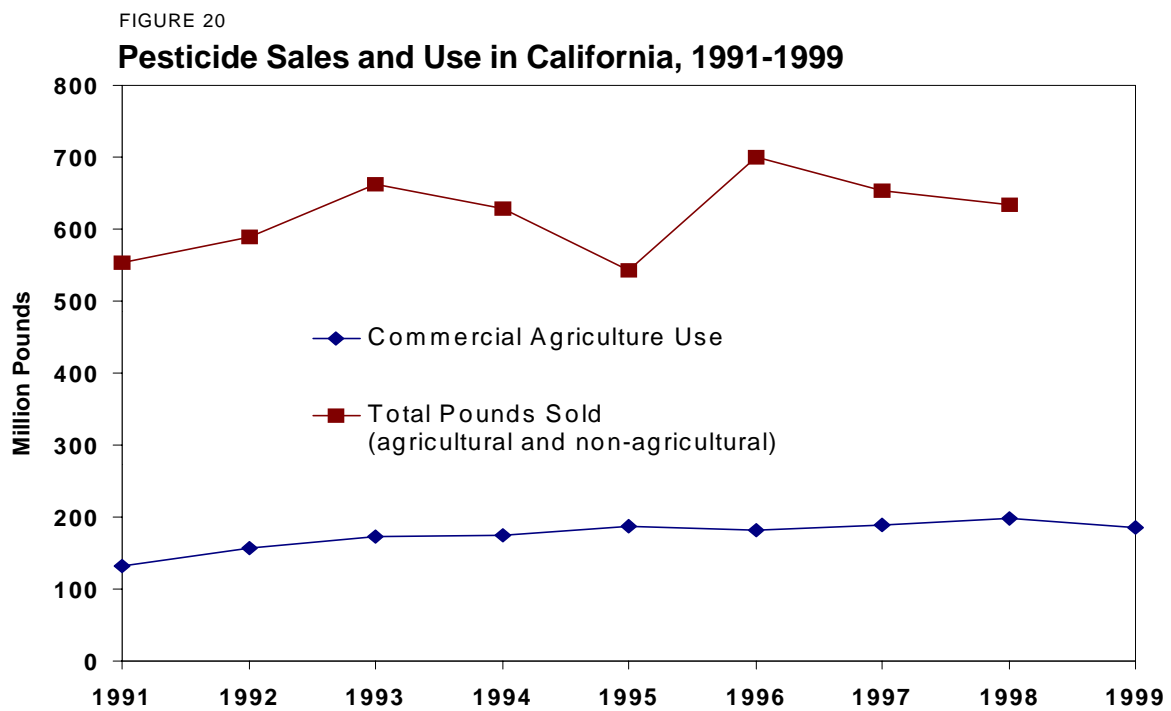


II.3 Chemicals and Fertilizer

By weight, agriculture accounts for about one third of all pesticides purchased in California. In 1990, California became the first state to require reporting of the agricultural use of all pesticides: insecticides, herbicides, rodenticides, fungicides, and sanitizers. In contrast, much of the non-agricultural uses such as chlorine for swimming pools and home and garden pesticides are not reported.

- Pounds of pesticides sold in the state increased from 1991 to 1999, as did the amount used in commercial agriculture. Weight however, does not necessarily reflect the toxicity of the pesticides. The Department of Pesticide Regulation noted in 1999 that agricultural applications of many of the more toxic chemicals were reduced to their lowest levels in years.
- In 1999, about 351,000 pounds of chemicals defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as “reduced risk” were applied by commercial agriculture in California. This was equivalent to about two-tenths of 1% of total pounds of applied chemicals in agriculture.



Source: California Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Pesticide Regulation, Pesticide Use Reporting, online data, 2000.

- About one-third of all California farms (22,300) did not report using any chemicals or fertilizer in the 1997 *Census of Agriculture*. California has about 1,526 registered organic farmers, only a tiny portion of those farms that did not report using any chemicals or fertilizer. Therefore, care is needed in interpreting these *Census of Agriculture* figures, since many farmers may have failed to respond to this particular question or were small livestock growers or other operators whose farms used no chemicals or fertilizer without being defined explicitly as “organic.”

TABLE 20

Agricultural Chemical and Fertilizer Use Reported by California Farmers

		1969	1974	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997
Chemicals or Fertilizer	Number of Farms	43,656	37,627	52,746	51,435	57,579	52,917	51,819
Commercial Fertilizer	Number of Farms	36,337	32,865	42,857	41,909	44,683	42,602	42,312
	Expenditures (\$1,000)	121,905	290,455	335,444	427,823	427,924	568,772	746,325
Agricultural Chemicals	Number of Farms	n/a	n/a	46,449	43,142	52,614	45,721	44,327
	Expenditures (\$1,000)	n/a	n/a	288,968	468,604	544,779	694,549	957,006
Number of Farms on which Chemicals were Used to Treat:	Insects	23,617	19,297	24,706	30,460	32,959	30,022	28,451
	Nematodes	2,995	2,512	3,325	3,526	3,603	3,520	3,553
	Diseases	8,042	6,802	17,553	15,280	17,446	14,693	16,207
	Weeds	12,602	14,106	22,385	28,192	35,003	28,292	28,807
	Growth, fruit or Defoliation	3,748	2,761	5,461	5,483	6,173	4,673	5,231

Sources:

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Agriculture*, 1969-1992.
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*.