

# California Broomrape Board

## Strategic Plan

October 2024

Facilitated By: Nuffer, Smith, Tucker



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF  
FOOD & AGRICULTURE



**Tomato fields in California** are facing a clear and present danger: broomrape, an invasive weed threatening crop yields, land values and California’s tomato processing industry. But there is good news – Assembly Bill 402 established the Broomrape Board within the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to protect the tomato industry from the invasive weed. In September 2024, the board embarked on a strategic planning process to determine how best to do it.

At its core, strategic planning is about answering three basic questions: Where are we now as an industry and board? Where do we want to be in the future? And, most importantly, how will we get there? To help answer these questions and develop a clear roadmap in the fight against broomrape, the board engaged Nuffer, Smith, Tucker, which served as the strategic planning facilitator.

NST worked with a carefully developed strategic planning task force – designed to represent various geographic segments of the industry and draw upon the expertise of tomato industry leaders and advisors – to develop the plan, which was later approved by the board of 12 growers and handlers of processing tomatoes and one member representing the public.

### Using This Plan

The strategic plan is intended to serve as a guide for the Broomrape Board and its activities. While the foundation of the plan – mission, vision, values and strategic priorities – should remain over time, the exact activities of the board may evolve as more information is gained about broomrape and its presence in California.



## Broomrape Board Strategic Planning Task Force

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# Strategic Plan at a Glance

## **Mission** (Core Business):

To protect the economic viability of the tomato industry by funding research, extending knowledge and implementing policies and protocols related to broomrape.

## **Vision** (Destination We Are Working Toward):

A thriving and profitable tomato industry where broomrape has limited economic impact.

## **Values** (Principles to Drive Decisions):

At the California Broomrape Board, we:

- Unite and support all tomato growing regions.
- Are action oriented and accountable.
- Use the best available science to guide us.
- Collaborate and communicate for shared success.
- Are sound stewards of industry dollars.

## **Overarching Strategy:**

Support immediate voluntary industry controls to reduce broomrape risks while pursuing and implementing long-term research solutions aimed at better detection, prevention, control and eventual eradication.

## **Strategic Priorities** (Areas of Focus to Achieve the Vision):

1. **Detection:** Understand the current location and future risks to the industry.
2. **Engagement, Education & Collaboration:** Engage the tomato and allied industries in the fight against broomrape to develop coordinated and effective actions to protect California agriculture.
3. **Enact Protocols:** Use science-based approaches to develop and implement protocols — including sanitation, herbicide, etc. — to manage broomrape and reduce its spread across the industry.
4. **Research:** Expand the tools available to fight broomrape through research aimed at detection, prevention, treatment and long-term solutions.
5. **Advocate:** Advocate for tomato growers and processors, including expanded tools, resources and policies to help them thrive.



# Strategic Priority #1: Detection

Understand the current location and future risks to the industry.

## Short-Term Recommendations:

- Implement and analyze voluntary electronic grower survey with an aim to understand the current location of broomrape throughout the state; use results to fine-tune the strategic plan.
- Develop an anonymous reporting system so that the industry can better understand the location of broomrape and its change over time.
- Incentivize self-reporting of broomrape by removing concern over significant regulatory or financial burdens.
- Develop a risk-based model to understand what areas should be considered high risk for the plant pest.
- Draft a matrix for possible courses of regulatory action that industry could explore via CDFA. Options should consider incentives for growers and be presented to the board for consideration.

## Longer-Term Recommendations:

- Conduct a risk-based or visual detection survey via CDFA for possible long-term regulatory protocols. Note: Field survey via CDFA is a prerequisite for any regulatory action that may be supported by the board at a future time.





## Strategic Priority #2: Engagement, Education & Collaboration

Engage the tomato and allied industries in the fight against broomrape to develop coordinated and effective actions to protect California agriculture. At the strategic planning session, it was agreed that the board's engagement efforts should focus on the tomato industry, including its various touchpoints, in the short-term. Long-term engagement should expand to allied and other at-risk industries.

### Short-Term Recommendations:

- Develop a list serve/email database for the board to use to provide outreach and education to industry. Careful consideration should be made in development of the list, and in determining which information should be shared in this manner.
- Develop positioning and messaging strategy for the Broomrape Board — defining the board's role and the value it provides to the tomato industry — to ensure consistent and strategic communications about broomrape risks and board actions.
- Develop a year-round communications plan that includes multiple target audiences, including growers, handlers, field workers, PCAs, extension specialists, etc. Plan may include tactics such as:
  - Meetings, events and in-field trainings.
    - Explore scouting trainings for CE credits for PCAs, or tailgate training sessions for field crews.
  - Materials development, including those aimed at communicating best practices endorsed in Strategic Priority #3. Materials should be developed in English, Spanish and other languages as necessary.
  - Trade media relations, e.g. when beneficial, work via industry-focused media to communicate about the issue of broomrape and how industry can help; consider opinion pieces penned by industry members.
- Develop an issues management/crisis communications plan for how the board will address future detections, notifications, etc.

### Longer-Term Recommendations:

- Expand communications efforts with allied industry groups that could also be impacted by broomrape or by regulatory actions related to broomrape.
- Consider the creation of grower liaisons, e.g. individuals contracted via CDFA specifically for the purpose of maintaining grower relations in regions throughout the state.





## Strategic Priority #3: Enact Protocols

Use science-based approaches to develop and implement protocols — including sanitation, herbicide, etc. — to manage broomrape and reduce its spread across the industry.

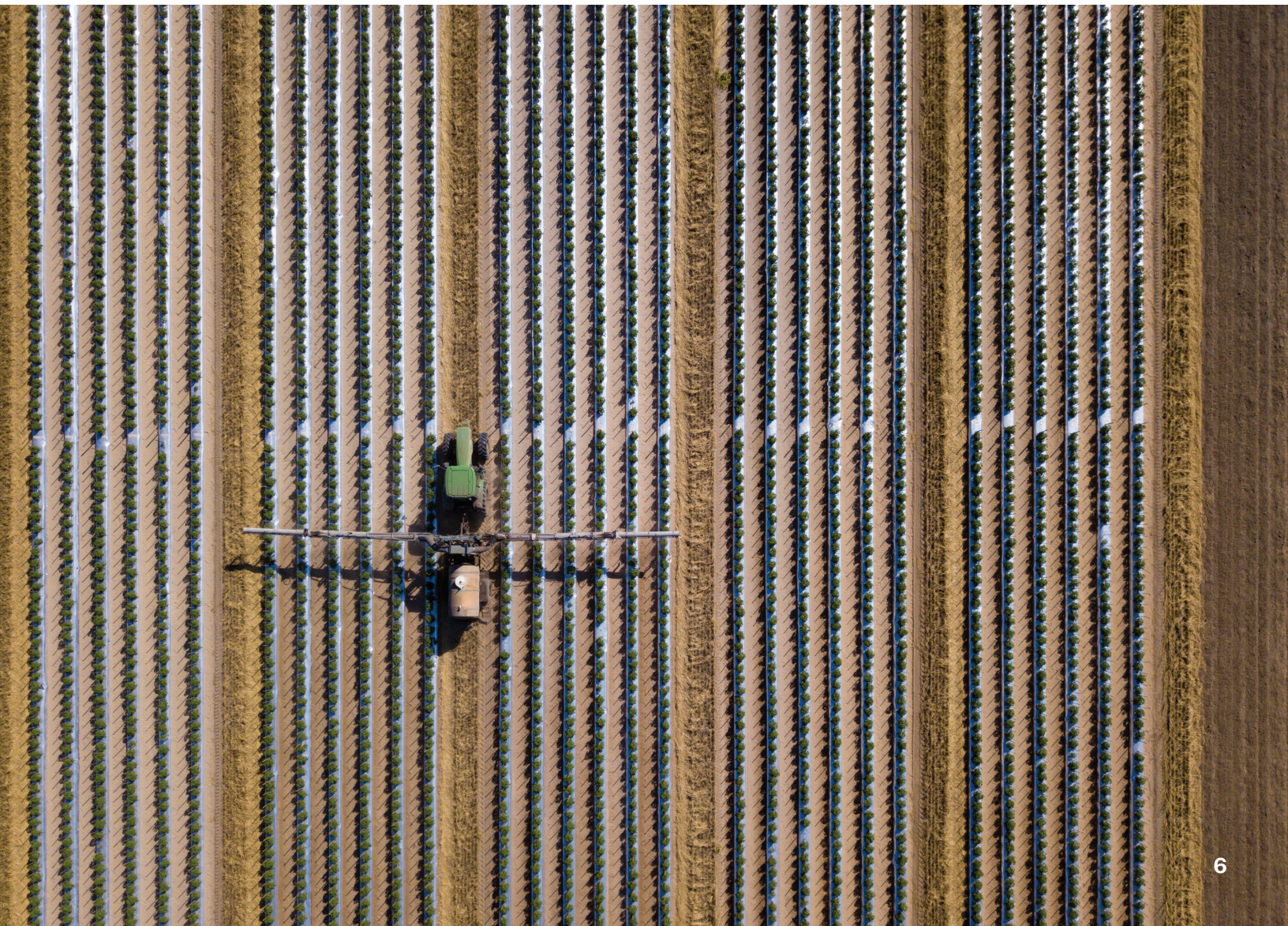
### Short-Term Recommendations:

- Endorse voluntary sanitation protocols for equipment, machinery and more. Protocols should cover the field to the factory.
- Endorse herbicide protocols for in-field treatments.
- Develop and implement voluntary compliance agreements for industry stakeholders, including harvesters, transplanters, truckers and processors.

Note: Promotion of protocols and participation in voluntary compliance agreement should be the basis of communications in Strategic Priority #2.

### Long-Term Recommendations:

- Develop and endorse remediation plan for infected fields, following additional research to fuel recommendations.





## Strategic Priority #4: Research

**Expand the tools available to fight broomrape through research aimed at detection, treatment and long-term solutions.**

- Finalize a clear research roadmap to define industry research priorities and to guide investments made by the Broomrape Board. The roadmap should be presented for board approval and consider research in areas such as: genetics, soil sterilization, new chemical compounds, early identification methods, etc.
  - Review options matrix from Strategic Priority #1 to draw implications for areas of further research.
- Consider the development and maintenance of a research library where broomrape-related information can be accessed by industry.
- Pursue grants and other third-party funding for research whenever possible.
- Maintain and grow relationships with the research community, regardless of university or regional affiliation, to direct or support research to best meet industry needs. This could include writing letters of support for matching funding for researchers writing grant proposals to outside funding bodies or funding research directly.
  - Develop a tomato breeders consortium around the topic of broomrape, including public and private tomato breeders, allowing for the thorough vetting of proposals in the area of breeding and more streamlined sharing of information.
  - Consider long-term relationships with key researchers.





## Strategic Priority #5: Advocate

**Advocate for tomato growers and processors, including for tools, resources and policies to help them thrive.**

- Explore funding opportunities from the Farm Bill and other available sources to support the tomato industry in fighting broomrape.
- Explore board-funded grant program to compensate growers whose fields are impacted by broomrape. Present options and financial analysis to board for consideration.
- Advocate for the development and approved use of new sustainable pest management tools.
- Develop a suite of communication tools to advocate on behalf of the industry, working closely with Strategic Priority #2. Tools should include discussion of the economic and societal impact of tomato production to communities, the state, the country and the world.
- Educate local elected officials in areas impacted by broomrape about the issue.
- Monitor policy and proposed policies at the local, state and federal level that could impact the tomato industry in its fight against broomrape. When needed, provide education and outreach to those who may affect policy.

