

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs



Department of Agricultural Resources

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Kimberley Driscoll
Lieutenant Governor

Rebecca L. Tepper
Secretary

Ashley E. Randle
Commissioner

PESTICIDE BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

February 17, 2026

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Michael Moore, DPH, Food Protection Program, (Chair)	Present
Taryn LaScola, MDAR, Designee for Commissioner Randle	Present
Meg Blanchet, DPH, Designee for Commissioner Goldstein	Present
Eric Seaborn, DCR, Designee for Commissioner LaChapelle	Present
Richard Berman, Commercial Applicator	Present

The Board did meet or exceed the minimum number (3) of members present to form a quorum and conduct business.

A. REVIEW OF MINUTES FOR December 16, 2025

Motion: R. Berman

Second: T. LaScola

Discussion: None

In Favor: M. Moore, T. LaScola, M. Blanchet, R. Berman

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

B. PRODUCT REGISTRATIONS

Motion That the Pesticide Board Subcommittee registers the pesticide products listed on the EIPAS PR February 17, 2026, Subcommittee cover sheet with the exception of the following product:

1. Amara, EPA Reg. No. 98588-1-71711

Moved: R. Berman

Second: T. LaScola

Discussion: None

In Favor: M. Blanchet, R. Berman, T. LaScola, M. Moore,

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

C. NEW ACTIVE INGREDIENT

Miller presented information on the new active ingredient (a.i.) *Bacillus velezensis* strain 11604, formulated in the product Amara Biofungicide/Bactericide (EPA Reg. No. 98588-1-71711), a broad-spectrum fungicide/bactericide for control and suppression of multiple plant diseases in berries, vegetables, and pome and stone fruits.

Amara contains *Bacillus velezensis* strain 11604 and spent fermentation media at a minimum concentration of one billion colony forming units (cfu) per gram. This is 87.05% by weight of the formulation, which is a suspension concentrate. The active ingredient is a bacterial strain isolated from lettuce leaves but widely found in soils, water, rhizospheres, and on foods. It is a nonpathogenic soil and plant colonizer that outcompetes fungi, resulting in control of soil-borne and foliar plant diseases such as powdery mildew, caused by several types of fungal pathogens, and black rot. The mode of action includes production of antifungal metabolites and enzymes that are involved in nutrient cycling and microbial suppression activity.

Amara has 'Caution' as the label signal word. Handlers are required to wear baseline PPE as well as waterproof gloves and protective eyewear. Mixers, loaders, and applicators must wear a specified NIOSH-approved particulate filtering or air purifying respirator. The restricted entry interval for agricultural workers is 4 hours.

The environmental hazard statement specifies that Amara is for terrestrial use only, with the standard prohibition against direct application to water, areas where surface water is present, or to intertidal areas below the mean high watermark.

Uses: Amara is for use on a wide variety of vegetables including brassicas, bulbs, cucurbit, fruiting and leafy vegetables, as well as roots and tubers. Other uses include berries, pome and stone fruit, grapes, strawberries, and on hops. The application method is foliar by ground spray. Allowed rates are 1 to 3 quarts of product/acre, mixed with 20 to 100 gallons of water/acre. The pre-harvest interval is zero days.

Human Health: The applicant submitted data on manufacturing-use material that demonstrated the a.i. is toxicity Category IV, or lowest risk, for all acute exposure pathways. Acute inhalation for the end product was found to be Category III. No hypersensitivity effects were reported and cell culturing was not required. An acute pulmonary toxicity/pathogenicity study was conducted and the technical grade a.i. was found not to be infective or pathogenic. No toxicity endpoints were identified and therefore a quantitative exposure assessment was not conducted.

There are no dietary exposure concerns since *Bacillus velezensis* is naturally occurring and found widely, including on plant surfaces. It is present as vegetative cells and resistant spores that can survive cooking and water purification, but food- and water-borne diseases have not been associated with it. No adverse effects are anticipated from label rate applications. An exemption from the requirement of a tolerance for residues has been established in or on all food and feed commodities when used in accordance with label directions and good agricultural practices. There are no residential uses, though some potential exists for non-occupational residue exposure. Based on the submitted data, EPA considers the bacterial strain a low-hazard microbe, and exposure via spray drift would not be expected to present a human health hazard. Label mitigation measures such as PPE are expected to minimize occupational exposure. In sum, EPA anticipates no unreasonable adverse effects to humans.

Ecological Risk Assessment: All ecological assessment data requirements were addressed with studies, except for avian inhalation, estuarine/marine organism, and non-target plant requirements, which were satisfied with acceptable scientific rationales. Birds, amphibians, reptiles, and wild mammals may be exposed when consuming or coming into contact with soil, plants, and drainage water that might contain strain 11604 from applications. Nontarget plants may also be exposed via runoff and drift, but this strain is

not a plant pathogen. Studies demonstrated that strain 11604 is practically non-toxic to mammals and birds. Any feeding impacts to bees in natural environments are expected to be minimized by more diverse food sources than used in studies. Aquatic environment exposure might result from drift or runoff, since direct application to water is not an allowed use. However, studies on rainbow trout and water fleas indicated no observed adverse effects.

Endangered Species Act: The agency determined that lack of effects on wildlife and low estimated environmental concentrations justified a 'No Effect' finding for federally threatened and endangered organisms as well as their designated critical habitats from the proposed uses of strain 11604.

Fate/Transport: Work reported in the scientific literature indicate that this a.i. degrades when exposed to UV light and under humidity/temperature fluctuations, making it non-persistent in the environment.

Groundwater Protection: *Bacillus velezensis* strain 11604 does not meet the criteria for being classified as a potential groundwater contaminant in Massachusetts.

Move: that the Pesticide Board Subcommittee approve the product registration for AMARA Biofungicide/Bactericide, EPA Reg. No. 98588-1-71711, containing the new active ingredient *Bacillus velezensis* strain 11604, which has never before been registered in Massachusetts.

Moved: R. Berman

Second: T. LaScola

Discussion: None

In Favor: M. Blanchet, R. Berman, T. LaScola, M. Moore, E. Seaborn

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

D. Policy Discussion: The Pesticide Board Subcommittee will have a discussion on a proposed draft policy for voting on agenda items that require substantial review and evaluation. (Vote required)

LaScola briefly summarized a draft policy document describing an approach for providing advance notice of the timeline for non-routine items to be included on agendas for upcoming meetings. The draft policy was screenshared during the meeting for initial review and discussion. LaScola explained that for non-routine items requiring substantial review and evaluation (for example, an individual review), the policy proposes placing the topic on a meeting agenda for an initial discussion to determine an appropriate timeline for further discussion, deliberation, and a potential vote at future meetings. Once the Subcommittee reaches consensus on a timeline, the topic would be scheduled accordingly.

LaScola clarified that although "Vote Required" may appear on the agenda for a topic, this does not necessarily mean that a vote must occur at that meeting unless the Subcommittee determines that it is ready to vote.

Moore stated that he considers the draft a good working document that could be shared with Subcommittee members' agencies for review and comment.

Blanchet asked whether proposed motions could be shared with Subcommittee members in advance. Burgess (MDAR Legal) noted that drafting and sharing motions in advance with Subcommittee members, particularly for topics requiring substantial review and evaluation, could be considered deliberation and may create conflicts with the Open Meeting Law. Burgess explained that a more appropriate approach would be to hold an initial discussion during a meeting to identify potential options for action. These options could then be taken back to the respective agencies for review and consideration.

LaScola noted that the draft document that was screenshared during the meeting would be shared with the Subcommittee following the meeting. Blanchet asked whether the document could include possible motion options. LaScola indicated that the purpose of the document is to provide a protocol for advance notice and planning for the review of topics, such as individual reviews. Discussion during meetings would identify possible options for action, which members could then take back to their agencies for review and consideration.

LaScola reiterated that the document focuses on procedures for providing advance notice and planning the review of non-routine items. She stated that an updated version reflecting edits based on the discussion at this meeting will be provided to the Subcommittee. Members may submit additional comments and suggestions to MDAR staff, which can then be raised during the next meeting. Burgess clarified that this process is consistent with the requirements of the Open Meeting Law.

E. NEW BUSINESS

Berman asked whether information related to the public hearing on anticoagulant rodenticides scheduled for next month is available. LaScola indicated that this information will be sent to Subcommittee members and interested parties later this week. Blanchet noted that she will not be able to attend the meeting and will send an alternate representative from DPH.

F. ADJOURN

Motion: To adjourn February 17, 2026, Subcommittee Meeting.

Moved: R. Berman

Second: T. LaScola

Discussion: None

In Favor: M. Blanchet, R. Berman, T. LaScola, M. Moore, E. Seaborn

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

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