

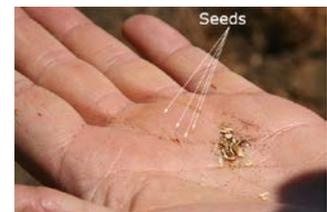
Egyptian Broomrape: First Discovery in United States (aka: Damn this Parasitic Weed)! Gene M. Miyao, University of California Cooperative Extension, Yolo, Solano & Sacramento Counties, 70 Cottonwood Street, Woodland, CA, USA. 95695 emmiyao@ucanr.edu

A July 2014 discovery of an infestation of broomrape in a local processing tomato field (in Solano County, California) is a stark example of unknowingly introducing a harmful parasitic weed pest. In this case, the consequence of this discovery was a CDFA/USDA quarantine resulting in crop destruction of the host tomato crop without harvest. Supportively, the processing tomato industry through California Tomato Growers Association, the California Tomato Research Institute and California tomato processors organized with CDFA to fund a control effort to eradicate the first reported introduction of this broomrape species, *Orobanche aegyptiaca*, into the United States. Fumigation is costly at ~\$4K per acre. Subsequently, in order to remove the quarantine, the grower must plant susceptible host crops to monitor broomrape emergence as escapes. There are limited economic crop choices until the grower demonstrates successful eradication. How would anyone know ahead of time that a field was infested with the tiny speck of a broomrape seed? And before these parasitic weeds emerged as a foreign-looking plant to trigger an alert, how many tractors and people passed through the field as unaware potential carriers to spread the seeds?



Bottom Line: Vigilance with sanitation may reduce the introduction of unwanted pests. Perhaps field sanitation should be an adopted routine when leaving a field. This might apply to all of us as field personnel scouting fields as well as equipment operators and irrigators. An ounce of prevention is worth...

The Industry Response? What will be the tact if additional fields are infested in the future? Can we move as an industry to accept the presence of broomrape without quarantine? The Australian and the Israeli tomato industries approach is to control the pest much like another weed within the season because eradication attempts failed. The question remains for us in California: left unchecked and without government quarantine, how big of an agronomic problem will broomrape become? If the new species outbreak in the Solano field represents the norm, the problem is serious and would likely worsen without a unified eradication effort. A quarantine program without an economic means to eradicate the pest is not a solution. If the problem becomes worse, the industry needs to rally.



Below are links to broomrape information.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/weeds/downloads/orobanche-aegyptiaca-factsheet.pdf

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/EXOTIC/egyptianbroomrape.html>