

## Californians debate release of genetically engineered insects with a DNA 'kill switch' to fight disease

A biotech firm is seeking permission to release genetically modified mosquitoes into the open air of California for the first time later this year, aiming to reduce the expanding populations of invasive mosquitoes and prevent deadly disease.

If approved, the controversial research project – planned for the Tulare County community of Visalia, with potential expansion into Fresno, San Bernardino and Stanislaus counties – will over time introduce 2 million male mosquitoes with a “kill switch” built into their DNA. When they mate with wild insects, their offspring die, causing an eventual collapse of the population.”

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But others say the project is being rushed into field testing without sufficient review and public consultation.

“We’re lab rats,” said Angel Garcia, a native of Tulare County’s citrus-growing town of Lindsay.

“The community was not included in the process. If they really want to protect public health, we need to be at the table,” said Garcia, of Californians for Pesticide Reform. “There seems to be no transparency, no independent review and no public participation.”

According to critics, there’s no publicly available data to support Oxitec’s claims that the introduced mosquitoes will reduce incidence of mosquito-borne diseases.

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.\*\*](#)