

Cannabis Lab Operator Urges for Stricter Testing Regulations

Anresco Laboratories Tackles Potency Inflation and Pesticides in the Cannabis Industry

Anresco Laboratories, a family-owned business based in San Francisco, has been at the forefront of food product testing since its inception in 1943. Founded by Sylvan Eisenberg, a chemist and Stanford University Ph.D., Anresco Laboratories has built a strong reputation over the decades. In 2015, the company expanded its operations to include cannabis testing, a decision that would ultimately put them at the center of crucial industry investigations into product safety.

Anresco's Role in Cannabis Testing and Industry Research

Anresco's expansion into the cannabis industry came at a time when the U.S. cannabis market was becoming more regulated, and safety concerns regarding products were beginning to surface. The company's work, under the leadership of Zachary Eisenberg—grandson of the founder—has been instrumental in identifying troubling trends like potency inflation and pesticide contamination. As Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Anresco, Zachary Eisenberg chairs the Cannabis Science Section of the American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL), a Washington, D.C.-based trade association. In his role, Eisenberg and his team conducted studies that exposed systemic issues within regulated marijuana markets, uncovering disturbing practices even in states with strict cannabis testing protocols.

Uncovering Potency Inflation in the Cannabis Industry

Potency inflation is a widespread issue in the cannabis industry, particularly with flower products and extracts. In simple terms, potency inflation refers to the practice of reporting higher-than-actual THC levels in cannabis products. This is done to meet consumer demand for more potent products or to give the appearance of higher quality. As Eisenberg explains, there is considerable pressure from cultivators and distributors to ensure that testing labs report high THC levels, which drives consumers to purchase these products at higher prices.

Through research conducted in collaboration with other labs, the investigation revealed that potency inflation was widespread in the market. This led to growing concerns among consumers and regulators alike, as inflated potency levels could lead to misleading information and a lack of transparency in product labeling.

Pesticide Contamination and Its Impact on Consumer Safety

Along with potency inflation, Anresco's investigations also uncovered alarming levels of pesticide contamination in cannabis products. Many of these products were coming from state-regulated dispensaries, where the assumption is that they have been tested and cleared for consumer use. Anresco's tests revealed that some of these products contained banned substances, which could pose significant health risks to

consumers.

In a discussion with *MJBizMagazine*, Eisenberg reflected on his team's discoveries: "We had customers that said, 'Oh, you're finding pesticides in our products, and other labs aren't. So, we're going to start using those labs instead.'" This revealed a disturbing trend where some testing labs were either failing to detect pesticide contamination or were not reporting it accurately. This prompted Anresco to partner with *The Los Angeles Times* and *WeedWeek* to investigate the extent of pesticide contamination in products cleared for sale by state-regulated testing labs.

Challenges in Testing and Regulatory Oversight

Despite the efforts of labs like Anresco to maintain high standards of testing, the current regulatory framework is not sufficient to ensure consumer safety. Eisenberg pointed out that while California's Department of Cannabis Control (DCC) maintains a list of 66 prohibited substances, this list is outdated and does not account for newer, potentially dangerous compounds being used in cultivation. As the cannabis industry evolves, so must the list of banned substances and the testing protocols.

In addition, testing labs can be vulnerable to manipulation, a practice known as "dry-labbing," where a lab might not properly analyze a sample or may even falsify results to meet the demands of cultivators and distributors. Eisenberg acknowledged that while some labs may be incapable of properly analyzing samples due to a lack of equipment or expertise, others may intentionally misreport results to avoid losing clients. In response to these concerns, regulators have begun taking more aggressive enforcement actions against labs suspected of dry-labbing or misreporting results.

Industry Pushback and Public Reactions

Anresco's whistleblowing efforts have not come without backlash. Some cannabis brands whose products were flagged for pesticide contamination have expressed frustration, claiming that the reports were part of a larger conspiracy to undermine their businesses. However, Eisenberg emphasized that the goal was always to ensure public health and safety, not to damage any specific company.

However, Eisenberg also received positive feedback from other companies that appreciated Anresco's transparency. This has led to an increasing number of cannabis companies seeking out more thorough testing and adopting higher standards of quality control.

Steps Toward Improvement and Industry Self-Regulation

Despite the challenges, Eisenberg remains optimistic that the issues of potency inflation and pesticide contamination will be addressed. He cited positive developments in regulatory bodies, including the DCC's increasing proactive stance in surveillance sampling and product recalls. Additionally, the cannabis industry is beginning to self-regulate, with companies implementing "Category 4" testing to ensure products meet safety standards before they hit the market.

A Future Focused on Safety and Transparency

As the cannabis industry continues to grow, the efforts of organizations like Anresco Laboratories will play a pivotal role in ensuring that consumer safety remains a top priority. With growing public awareness and increased regulatory attention, it's clear that the days of unchecked potency inflation and pesticide contamination may be numbered. The cannabis market will need to embrace transparency, accountability, and robust testing practices to maintain the trust of consumers and regulators alike.

Zachary Eisenberg's work and the investigations conducted by Anresco Laboratories are helping to shine a light on the industry's most pressing issues. His efforts to uncover potency inflation and pesticide contamination are reshaping the way cannabis products are tested and held accountable. Moving forward, industry leaders will need to collaborate with regulators and testing labs to ensure that the promise of safe, high-quality cannabis products becomes a reality for consumers everywhere.

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +855-507-2622

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