

OVERVIEW:

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) can deliver many long-term benefits including improved crop yield and quality, and reduced pesticide use and hazards. However, the start-up investment can be considerable including insect monitoring traps, equipment to monitor weather conditions, software to translate those conditions into actionable information, fees for consultants and scouts, and the time it takes to learn the IPM ropes.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) identify priority conservation practices available to growers (i.e. buffer strips, nutrient management) and offers incentive payments for growers to adopt these practices.

Unfortunately, IPM tends to be neglected or be a lower priority than other practices, and its incentive payments tend to reflect this by being undervalued or nonexistent.

The North Central Working Group “Grower Incentive for IPM” is working to support new partnerships between IPM professionals and NRCS staff in other states to increase EQIP and IPM participation region-wide. During the summer of 2008, the working group distributed \$5,000 mini-grants to working group members in three North Central states, including Ricky Foster (Purdue University, Indiana), Jerry DeWitt (Iowa State University’s Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa) and Jim Jasinski (Ohio State University, Ohio). These three mini-grants will help fund meetings and activities that strengthen the working relationship between NRCS and University IPM specialists, and increase the use of IPM through grower participation in NRCS conservation programs.

INDIANA SUMMARY:

Ricky Foster of Purdue University and his staff are collaborating with Indiana NRCS personnel and IPM colleagues to improve the financial and technical support for specialty crop growers through NRCS' EQIP pest management standard. This team's approach to making these improvements are to 1) hold a meeting for grower representatives from around the state to generate feedback on the current pest management standard (i.e., does the standard provide enough support, in which areas is it lacking) and what sorts of IPM practices and incentives would be of interest to them, and 2) hold a subsequent meeting for IPM specialists and NRCS personnel to evaluate this feedback and discuss ways of implementing improvements.

The group's first meeting was held December 5, 2008, and was attended by 13 specialty crop growers, 6 Purdue IPM specialists, and 3 NRCS employees. During the five hour meeting, Mike Brewer from Michigan State University made a presentation regarding successes in increasing IPM implementation through the EQIP program in Michigan. Tony Bailey from NRCS made a presentation about the EQIP in Indiana. The remainder of the meeting was for growers to provide their input as to how the EQIP could be used to further IPM adoption in Indiana. The growers represented tree fruit production, wine grape production, small fruit production, vegetable production, and processing tomato production. Each group of growers had the opportunity to address the specific IPM concerns for their industry and how the EQIP might be used to further adoption of those practices. The technical meeting will be held in early 2009. Following the December 2008 meeting, Tony Bailey, Rick Foster and John Obermeyer (Purdue) reached an agreement on what incentive payment scenarios to propose to the NRCS for 2009's

EQIP program. They presented these scenarios at the Indiana Horticultural Congress meeting in January 2009.

In April 2009, the group posted the 2009 EQIP guidelines for Indiana online

(http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/IN_2009_EQIP_Guidelines4-28-09.pdf).

IOWA SUMMARY:

Iowa State University will work with NRCS personnel, IPM specialists, University faculty and corn and soybean growers in Iowa to develop and enhance the NRCS' EQIP pest management practices and incentives, and to make the incentives increasingly available to these growers.

The goal is to discuss possible restructuring of EQIP pest management incentives package to increase interest and participation of Iowa crop growers' in EQIP.

Together, agencies will formulate a list of management practices while noting challenges that growers may be faced with when implementing IPM EQIP practices. "Grower-ready" IPM practices will also be discussed at the first of three meetings. The first meeting is scheduled for late December 2008 with the winter and spring meetings to follow in 2009.

In January 2009, the group held a meeting between Iowa State University faculty and NRCS staff to increase awareness and visibility of IPM and understanding how IPM may be integrated into their whole-farm planning. The group decided to ask grower representatives/leaders in the community to complete a questionnaire regarding whether they are using IPM on their farm, and if so, to what extent.

Additionally, there has been an ongoing collection of feedback in 2009 from corn and soybean growers about their previous involvement in EQIP and the challenges they face while increasing their involvement in the program. A meeting to review the compiled feedback and how to best

move forward has been scheduled between Iowa NRCS technical staff and Iowa state tech management specialists in May 2009.

OHIO SUMMARY:

Ohio State University (OSU) Extension specialists and NRCS personnel met on October 20, 2008 for their first collaborative effort to enhance EQIP's IPM standard in Ohio. Jim Jasinski (OSU), the mini-grant project coordinator, created an agenda ([linked to OH Mtg Agenda doc](#)) that introduced University faculty to the benefits and processes of EQIP, and NRCS personnel on how IPM (especially in regards to specialty crops) plays an important role in conservation. By combining the programmatic knowledge of the NRCS with the research and expertise of the Extension specialists, the team developed four IPM scenarios (general vegetable, strawberries, sweet corn and tree fruits) for consideration for the 2009 EQIP Pest Management standard. In winter 2008, the NRCS approved the amounts at 75% of their proposed value, and will be offered to growers in 2009. These rates help share the costs for many aspects of IPM, such as nozzle selection, monitoring, education and scouting fees.

The team identified two post-meeting steps to continue to push IPM adopting in Ohio. First, NRCS staff generally do not have the necessary training to write pest management plans for growers enrolled in the standard; therefore, the NRCS will need to find IPM consultants to write these plans or else work with Extension specialists to offer training to NRCS staff on advanced IPM. Second, many IPM practices such as crop rotation, drip irrigation, etc., are listed as separate standards within EQIP, some of which are not available in Ohio yet, and some of them have no cost incentive associated with them.

Bringing those standards to Ohio and establishing fair costs is critical over the next year. The group noted that creating an IPM “package,” which would acknowledge these separate standards, could be an effective way of improving the pest management standard.

In spring 2009, the group revised the IPM elements and guidelines for Ohio, with an eye for revising it for EQIP growers such that it offers concrete practices that growers can understand and employ. The group also developed a new set of IPM elements for strawberries and a draft scoring sheet for EQIP growers.

To increase awareness about the EQIP program in Ohio, two news releases written by Jim Jasinski were published in April 2009.