

## NRCS and IPM Working Group – Conference Call Notes from August 1, 2008

Workgroup url - <http://www.ipm.msu.edu/work-group/home.htm>

Workgroup listserv: [EQIP@LIST.MSU.EDU](mailto:EQIP@LIST.MSU.EDU)

Corrections/additions to Brenna Wanous at [bwanous@ipminstitute.org](mailto:bwanous@ipminstitute.org)

**Next Call:** September 5, 9:00 Central/10:00 Eastern.

**Participating:** Tony Bailey (IN NRCS), Anastasia Becker (MO Dept. of Ag), Alan Forkey (CA NRCS), Rick Foster (Purdue), Bob Fry (CA NRCS), Sherry Glick (EPA PESP), Pete Goodell (UC Statewide IPM Program), Tom Green (IPM Institute, WI), Regina Hirsch (UW - Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems), Jim Jasinski (OSU), Barb Stewart (IA NRCS), Brenna Wanous (IPM Institute, WI)

### I. California NRCS/IPM Collaboration

NRCS and UC IPM have established a formal collaboration to work towards mutual goals in protecting resource concerns through IPM, primarily through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Bob Fry, Alan Forkey and Pete Goodell joined us on this call to brief us on the development of the collaboration.

1. Initial priorities for establishing tech assistance and incentives for IPM in EQIP.
  - a. NRCS needed to identify what IPM and IPM –related practices were appropriate to address resource concerns and what incentives producers required to implement those; determine what sorts of documentation would be required to verify the practices were in place over the life of the EQIP contract; establish how to screen and rank applications and practices; and communicate with NRCS field offices in the state. IPM has always been a challenge generally because pests and practices vary among the different microclimates and geography within California.
  - b. IPM side was motivated to access NRCS program incentives to increase IPM adoption and had a good understanding of the IPM practices and how they might be documented to earn incentives. UC IPM especially wanted to use this opportunity to bring new growers into IPM.
  - c. There was long standing informal teamwork between NRCS and University of California Extension, but formal collaboration on IPM was viewed as beneficial to facilitate progress toward each party's goals.
  - d. UC IPM already had an extensive list of crop-specific guidelines on-line, however these were organized by pest (organism). NRCS needed documents that would reflect a cropping season including all the pests and practices involved in each crop.
2. Process and status
  - a. A formal contract was developed between NRCS and UC IPM that provided dollars to UC IPM for services.
  - b. Starting with prunes, UC IPM staff created 1-2 page crop-specific guidelines to help growers identify IPM priorities and help NRCS personnel determine fit with resources concerns and EQIP.
    - i. Now have 41 crop-specific guidelines, 12 of them year-round crop guidelines.

- ii. Year-round guidelines have 4-5 page checklists for pests and elements during that time of year.
  - c. UC also developed a resource-rich website for growers, including pesticide information, trainings, educational materials, etc.
  - d. UC held five “IPM Boot Camps” to educate NRCS and growers about IPM and its use in EQIP, discuss the IPM guidelines and introduce their website. The IPM Boot Camps are continuing regionally, covering more specific knowledge on local crops, pests and practices.
  - e. NRCS put together a program with two levels of IPM: lower level is for basic IPM; higher level helps growers with need for high-investment practices, e.g., beneficial insect releases. All contracts must include the IPM basics including sampling, monitoring, recordkeeping.
  - f. NRCS field offices are now able to answer many of the IPM and program questions, while IPM specialists answer the more pest- and location-specific questions.
  - g. NRCS is now updating the EQIP program practices and incentives, adjusting pay scales, identify new priorities in Farm Bill, and determining target crops for year-round programs.
  - h. Metrics haven’t been reported but the underlying data is there re number of contracts, growers, acres, crops, practices, etc.
3. Key lessons
- a. Initially, the state NRCS office led the development work and released the announcement that funds were available for IPM, assuming the field offices would be equipped to handle the requests. Some field offices had highly visible success in completing EQIP contracts for IPM in the past. However, many field offices had little or no experience with IPM and were caught by surprise, lacking expertise or staff to handle the requests for assistance that were generated by the statewide announcement.
  - b. Growers need to understand that EQIP is highly competitive and only a third to one half get funded; applications are ranked and the ranking favors those with the greatest potential for improvement and interest in multiple resource concerns, i.e., a farmer interested in IPM, water conservation, water quality protection and pollinator habitat receives higher rank than farmer interested only in IPM. An advanced farmer who has many practices in place already may not have a contract selected.
  - c. Reducing reliance on high-risk pesticides should be a priority, including practices that reduce reliance on pesticides generally, not just product substitution.
  - d. California is different than many other states. Ag is primarily specialty crops, commodity crops do not dominate as in other states. Some offices have 90% of their EQIP contracts in specialty crops, Fresno has about 50% and statewide the average is 34%. That was an advantage in this process – there was no need to shift programs, dollars and perspectives. EQIP state tech committee already had specialty crop representation.
4. Next steps
- a. Working with new Farm Bill to identify priorities and develop programs for those including specialty crops and organic.

- b. Working to increase awareness in the state with producer groups and others.
  - c. More efficient irrigation and IPM continue to be priorities.
- II. Other updates:
- 5. Mini-grants finalized in Indiana (Rick Foster-Purdue, Tony Bailey-NRCS), Iowa (Jerry DeWitt-ISU, Carol Pilcher-ISU, Barb Stewart-NRCS) and Ohio (Jim Jasinski-OSU, recruiting NRCS colleague).
    - a. See Jim Jasinski's workplan below; Iowa and Indiana drafted similar workplans.
  - 6. Grower Incentives proposal from University of Illinois
    - a. Sue Ratcliffe working on grant proposal that would fund additional IPM elements and guidelines to be developed.
    - b. Should know by end of September whether that will be funded.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY will work with IPM Institute, its project work team and advisory group in a mutually agreeable manner to meet the objectives developed by Ohio State University.

**Work plan– Developed and proposed by THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY:**

Ohio State University, represented by Jim Jasinski, will work with NRCS personnel, IPM specialists, University faculty and fruit and vegetable growers in Ohio to develop and enhance the NRCS' EQIP pest management practices and incentives, and to make the incentives increasingly available to specialty crop growers.

**Fall 2008**

- 1) Host an introductory and networking meeting with Ohio NRCS personnel, IPM specialists, fruit and vegetable grower representatives and Ohio State University faculty. The goals of the meeting are to:
  - a. Make connections between NRCS, IPM and growers,
  - b. Increase grower interest in EQIP,
  - c. Acquire valuable information from growers regarding the priority practices and feasibility of cost structures and
  - d. Increase grower access to EQIP.
- 2) The meeting should include:
  - a. Introductions and networking within meeting's attendees,
  - b. Background information of EQIP,
  - c. Information on the Wisconsin and Michigan experience with EQIP's pest management practices, incentives and how it applies to specialty crop growers,
  - d. Identify and discuss benefits, challenges and implementation of growers' priority practices, and
  - e. Discuss possible restructuring of EQIP pest management incentives package to increase interest and participation of specialty crop growers' in EQIP,
- 3) Other participants in this meeting can include experts on accessing EQIP for IPM support from within or outside of Ohio, as per the discretion of Ohio State University.
- 4) Meeting costs, including travel, refreshments, meeting space and staff time may be paid for by the funds hereby received from the IPM Institute.

**Ongoing responsibilities:**

- Participate in regular project team conference calls as appropriate, review of and comment on circulated materials;
- Prepare and submit a brief project report (1-2 pages, addressing status of deliverables) to the IPM Institute within 30 days of the close of the project performance period.