NRCS and IPM Working Group – Conference Call Notes from December 5, 2008

Workgroup url - http://www.ipm.msu.edu/work-group/home.htm
Workgroup listserv: EQIP@LIST.MSU.EDU
Corrections/additions to Brenna Wanous at bwanous@ipminstitute.org

Next Call: January 2, 9:00 Central/10:00 Eastern.

Participating (12): Paul Duffner (MO NRCS), Sharon Dobesh (KSU), David Epstein (MSU), Tom Green (IPM Institute, WI), Renee Hancock (NE NRCS), Erin Harpenau (ISU), Regina Hirsch (UW-Madison), Lynnae Jess (MSU), Bill Kuenstler (NRCS), Kathy Murray (Maine Dept. of Ag.), Wade Pronschinske (IPM Institute, WI), Brenna Wanous (IPM Institute, WI).

Agenda:

1. Briefing on IPM Options Evaluation Tool (Wade Pronschinske) – *Find "IPM Tool Presentation 100908" PDF attachment*

    a. Began in 2007 through funding from the NRCS' Conservation Innovation Grant. The team consists of project director (Tom Green), coordinator (Wade) and topical experts, including avian and aquatic species (Pierre Mineau, Environment Canada), bees and other beneficial (Paul Jepson, Oregon State University), human health issues and pesticide risk modeling (Chuck and Karen Benbrook, BCS Ecologic) and programmer/analyst (Michael Guzy, Oregon State University).

    b. The goal of the tool is to evaluate risks to resource concerns regarding the use of pesticides in agriculture and offer alternatives and mitigation options to reduce those risks.

    c. The tool's pilot version will target apple production, but the larger vision is for the tool to be applicable to all crops world-wide. The tool will be available to individual users for free, with a higher-tiered version available to larger entities (e.g. food processors, eco-labels).

    d. Process:

        i. Step one: Using this program, the user will select a cropping system and outline his/her field on a map, which will automatically match the user to a pre-defined, representative EPA scenario, which includes information about weather, soil, slope, infiltration rates, etc. to be used in the assessment. In the future, the tool will query NRCS soils data directly to run water modeling calculations on-the-fly.

        ii. Step two: The user identifies their current in-field mitigation practices (e.g. cover crop, no till, etc.) as well as nearby sensitive sites (i.e. surface water, pollinator habitat, etc.) and intervening flow path (e.g. bare soil, filter strip, etc.).

        iii. Step three: The user selects the pesticides currently used or considered for use, how the pesticide is applied and at what quantities on the field.

        iv. Step four: Based on this information, the program will generate a risk summary for numerous indices (e.g. aquatic species, pollinators, worker and consumer risk, etc.),

rated on a low-moderate-high scale. The program will also identify the specific pathway of exposure, such as surface run-off, drift, etc.

v. Step five: The tool will offer suggestions to the user on how to reduced or eliminate these risks by providing resources for IPM as well as mitigation practices such as filter strips, windbreaks, drift-reduction technology and more.

2. Discussion of recently proposed EQIP Pest Management standard (Tom Green)

a. There is a proposal to change the EQIP 595 pest management standard for FY10 is currently under review in the NRCS until January 30, 2009. **This proposed 596 standard is a significant change from the 595 standard. This is an important opportunity for you to review the change and provide feedback by contacting your State Resource Conservationist, Agronomist or Water Quality coordinator to provide feedback on the potential change.**

b. Currently, the 595 standard *(see attached "NRCS 595 Standard July 2008")* is a four-page document which outlines a commitment to IPM by employing all IPM-related tactics that are available and feasible to implement during the grower's contract. If these tactics are not enough, the current standard requires the planner to develop and implement a plan that addresses currently used pesticides and potential mitigation practices to protect the sensitive resources.

c. The proposed standard, (Standard 596, *see attached "Pesticide Risk Mitigation 596 final_Nov_6_08" and "Agronomy Tech Note XX - Pesticide Mitigation Techniques final Nov_06_08"*), is a two-page document that addresses pesticide risk mitigation of offsite pesticide impacts via reducing pesticide runoff, leachate, volatilization and drift.

i. Concerns have been expressed that the standard does not specify that the planner and grower need to develop on-site IPM plans or address issues of scouting, thresholds, weather monitoring, etc.

ii. Concerns have been expressed that the standard only applies to where pesticides are used. If the planner does not identify a risk of runoff, leachate, volatilization or drift, the grower is not required to take any further steps.

iii. Concerns have also been expressed that the 596 standard utilizes only a small portion of the NRCS' Pest Management policy items *(see attached "Pest Mgt Policy final 11-19-2008")*, rather than addressing IPM as a whole (i.e., to include cultural and biological management).

d. The current 595 standard provides a good overview of IPM, which helps explain to planners and growers what IPM is, but makes it a challenge to take the overview and apply it to a specific crop in a specific region. Working groups including the Northeast Vegetable IPM WG and ours have been working to bridge this gap by providing tools such as IPM Elements/Guidelines, IPM trainings and meetings between IPM specialists and NRCS staff.

While there may be work to do to continue to bridge this gap, the 596 standard may place IPM on the back-burner given that IPM becomes an undocumented part of the planning

process (i.e. it is expressed in the overall pest management policy, but is lost from any specific standard).

e. Timeline: the document is under internal review within the NRCS until January 30, 2009 **(please contact your state NRCS office to assist with reviewing and providing feedback on the proposed standard by January 30)**, and will be available for additional public feedback when published in spring 2009.

f. The January working group's conference call will be dedicated to the discussion of this proposed standard.