

Extension Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programs Threatened by Last-Minute Change in 2008 Farm Bill

ISSUE SUMMARY

- Extension IPM programs run by the nation's land grant universities make an essential contribution to the common good – providing training and advice that helps us protect our food supply, minimize human health risks, use pesticides judiciously, conserve environmental resources and improve the profitability of the nation's farmers.
- Historically, this national network of programs has been funded by the Farm Bill at an average of approximately \$135,000 per state each year. This modest investment produces far-reaching results by enabling a nationwide IPM infrastructure that supports seamless information sharing and knowledge transfer. Here are three examples of recent program successes:
 - *As the result of IPM training in Iowa, six out of 10 soybean farmers used an economic threshold analysis to help them cost-effectively manage yield-robbing soybean aphids.*
 - *Kentucky's Integrated Weed Science Group has won state, regional and national awards for its work, which is directly tied to a dramatic increase in wheat yields within the state.*
 - *The IPM program in South Dakota coordinated an effort to collect and redistribute 1.8 million flea beetles to combat the noxious weed leafy spurge. This tactic is credited with an 18,000-acre reduction in leafy spurge in northeast South Dakota.*
- A last-minute amendment to the 2008 Farm Bill threatens the very existence of many extension programs that support farmers and homeowners across the country.
- For the first time in the 30-year history of Extension IPM, funds will not be allocated to universities in each state on a proportional basis. Instead, a limited number of grants will be awarded competitively by the Secretary of Agriculture. This change erodes our national IPM network and is expected to leave entire regions of the country without the grower training and outreach needed to manage pests and weeds effectively.

THE IMPACT OF THE CHANGE

- The new funding model **reduces our capacity to respond quickly and effectively to emerging pest threats**. Critical expertise will wither away in states that lose funding, leaving entire regions of the country vulnerable to insects, diseases and weeds that know no geographical boundaries.

- With more limited areas of coverage, we also **weaken our ability to address pest, crop, climate, culture and environmental issues that are unique to a particular region or locale**. Pest management in agricultural and urban settings cannot be addressed by a simple “one size fits all” answer, and without an IPM infrastructure, thousands will be unable to receive the location-specific training they need.
- Though the new grant application process will not be in place until the spring, current programs lost funding without warning on October 1, 2008. In the interim, **many key highly skilled educators are at risk of losing their jobs and some have already received termination notices**. As a result, we have begun to suffer what could be **a permanent loss of expertise in our national Extension IPM network**.
- We also can expect to **lose the springboard effect our investment in IPM programs has delivered**. They are an important foundation for a wide range of initiatives in land management, environmental stewardship, pesticide safety and other areas critical to sustainability.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

- In recognition of the critical need for a national IPM network, the Weed Science Society of America advocates an immediate change in the amendment to the 2008 Farm Bill to restore formula funding for the Extension IPM program (Section 7403 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008).
- We encourage our members to contact elected and appointed government officials and other influential constituents in their state to discuss the benefits of Extension IPM programming, the damage the new funding model causes and the importance of maintaining a stable, efficient nationwide IPM network.

USEFUL LINKS

- For Senate contacts: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
- For House contacts: <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/home>
- For information on contacting key federal policymakers: <http://w2.eff.org/congress/#finding>
- For Gubernatorial contacts: <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Governors.shtml>