

EPA Liaison: Mark VanGessel

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Member of the Endangered Species Committee, Science Policy Committee, and participant in the monthly Washington DC Updates

Field Days

Coordinated Field Day for EPA staffers on September 13, held in cooperation with University of Maryland at the Wye Research and Education Center. The focus of the field day was the intersection of agronomy and weed management. About 30 EPA staffers participated, representing at least 5 divisions within the agency. (see attachment for more details).

Attended the Crop Life sponsored Field Tour in June. The tour visited FMC research facilities in Newark, DE and HarborView Farms near Rock Hall, MD. Attendees represented a number of federal agencies and commodity groups, but I estimate 25 to 30 EPA staffers attended.

IR-4 sponsored a field day for EPA staffers on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Delaware to discuss the importance of pesticides for specialty crops. I participated (hosted half-day field tour) at the UD Carvel Research and Education Center demonstrating ongoing research trials, but also discussed issues critical to regional vegetable farmers.

Webinars

Weed Control for Cotton. Dr. Peter Dotray presented on Cotton Production and Weed Control, focusing on west Texas production systems, but he also compared it with southeastern US production as well.

Sugarbeet Weed Control. Dr. Tom Peters (North Dakota State; Univ. of Minnesota) presented on Sugarbeet Production and Weed Control, focused on his region but also compared with western sugarbeet production.

Weed Control in Natural Areas. Dr. Kelly Ransom (Utah State University) discussed the importance and challenges of weed management in natural areas.

Control of Invasive Plants. Drs. Stephen Enloe and Jason Ferrell presented on the problem of invasive plants with a focus on habitats in Florida. However, examples of invasive plants throughout the United States were included.

I was asked to coordinate a webinar on the topic of “How Do People Interact with Pesticide Labels”. A very broad topic with the intent of learning about the disconnect between the intended label content and how it’s interpreted by the end user. The first speaker was Dr. Bill Chism who summarized the working group sessions at the 2023 WSSA Annual Meeting. The initial discussion was to have two seminars per year.

UPCOMING/FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Field Tour

Over the next few weeks, I will solidify a field tour for 2024. Two topics that have been discussed are weed management of perennial fruit crops and hands on discussion of implementing mitigations for herbicide use. This is in the early stages of discussion, but I am leaning towards the implementation of mitigations; however, the fruit crop was mentioned by someone from the EPA, so I need to explore that a little further.

Webinars

April EPA/WSSA webinar will focus on decision-making process by farmers. Topics to be addressed include how far head are farmers making management decisions and purchasing inputs; who do farmers rely on for these types of decisions; how do farmers view owned versus rented fields when it comes to input and “investment” and role of conservation programs. Presenter is Nate Bruce and Extension Farm Management Specialist from Delaware.

Need to discuss future topics for the webinar series under “interacting with pesticide labels”.

Other

Need to schedule a meeting of the EPA Liaison Committee in the next few weeks. It was too hectic to arrange a meeting prior to the Annual WSSA meeting but will convene a meeting by mid-March.

Items for WSSA Board

Help to develop a policy for registration fees and support for federal employees. If WSSA views interaction with federal employees as a key part of their mission, there should be a mechanism to encourage more participation. Many EPA scientists attend the meeting of their professional organizations, but since few weed scientists work for EPA, they have limited interaction with WSSA. Scheduling a meeting in the Washington DC region is one way to increase interaction, but more consistent interactions will be more fruitful for both parties.