

WASHINGTON UPDATE

By Lee Van Wychen

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Extension IPM Network Threatened

The Weed Science Society of America is advocating that Congress rescind a last-minute amendment to the 2008 Farm Bill that changes how Extension IPM programs are funded. 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.

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.
- Even though USDA-CSREES expedited the new grant application process, current programs lost funding without warning on October 1, 2008 and successful grant applicants will not receive IPM money until next spring. 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.
- Contact information for your Representative and Senators can be found at: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov . An email to them is a fast, efficient way to voice your concerns.

GAO Report on Improving Oversight of Biotech Crops

Currently, the United States accounts for about 50 percent of the genetically engineered (GE) crops planted globally. In 2008, GE varieties accounted for about 80 percent of the corn, 92 percent of the soybeans, and 86 percent of the cotton planted in the United States. Last year the Senate Agriculture Committee had asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to analyze current federal regulatory and oversight policy on GE crops. Taking direction from the *1986 Coordinated Framework for Regulation of Biotechnology*, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulate GE crops to ensure that they are safe. The unauthorized mixing of some GE crops with non-GE crops has caused controversy and financial harm. In this report, GAO examined (1) unauthorized releases of GE crops, (2) coordination among the three agencies, and (3) additional actions they have proposed to improve oversight.

WSSA members provided input and comments on several sections of the 109 page report including discussions around the need for more resources to monitor herbicide resistance and whether GE crops pose a risk as future noxious weeds.

Title - “Genetically Engineered Crops: Agencies Are Proposing Changes to Improve Oversight, but Could Take Additional Steps to Enhance Coordination and Monitoring.”

Full Report - <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-09-60>

Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d0960high.pdf>



10th annual National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week

10th National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week (NIWAW)

The Invasive Weeds Awareness Coalition (IWAC) invites you to Washington DC for a week of events focused on educating our **new** federal policy makers and elected officials about the environmental and economic losses caused by invasive weeds. The theme for NIWAW 10 is “*Preserving America’s Heritage*”. The headquarters hotel for NIWAW will be the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, 1201 K Street NW, Washington, DC, just several blocks from the White House in the heart of DC. We have a “NIWAW” room block with rooms at \$186 per night. There is a **January 22, 2009 deadline** for hotel reservations and meeting pre-registration. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.wssa.net/Meetings/NIWAW10/index.htm>

New Name for USDA NRI Grants

The USDA National Research Initiative (NRI) grants have been replaced by a new competitive grants program in the 2008 Farm Bill called the **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)**. While AFRI covers most of the same grant programs that were offered by the former NRI, the new authority allows greater flexibility in the types of projects funded to include: single function projects in research, education and extension, and integrated research, education and/or extension awards.

Total program funds for the “**Biology of Weedy and Invasive Species in Agroecosystems**” are approximately \$4.6 million. The Letter of Intent deadline for this grant program is April 20, 2009.

The synopsis of the AFRI program:

<http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&flag2006=false&oppId=44421>

New Name for NASULGC

The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges Board of Directors voted unanimously to change the association's name to the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), Advancing Research, Learning and Engagement, effective April 1, 2009.

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