

## WASHINGTON REPORT

April 15, 2024

Lee Van Wychen



*Presidents Breakfast at the 2024 WSSA-SWSS Annual Meeting*



*First meeting of the 2024-2025 WSSA Board of Directors*



***Weed Scientists at the 2024 Global Minor Use Summit IV in Madrid, Spain. (L to R: Dan Kunkel, Lee Van Wychen, Wilfredo Robles, Dirk Drost, Jerry Baron, and Michael Braverman***

On February 5 – 9, 2024, the Minor Use Foundation brought together growers, regulators, researchers, and crop protection professionals in Madrid, Spain for the [fourth Global Minor Use Summit \(GMUS-4\)](#).

Dirk Drost, president and board chairman for the Minor Use Foundation was very pleased to have such a diverse and experienced representation at the meeting with nearly 170 participants from 41 countries coming together to share ideas and strengthen our commitment to specialty crops and minor uses.

The Minor Use Foundation will be focused on the following key takeaways and will be hard at work on those “game changing” ideas:

- Technology: Understanding and learning to leverage new technologies for crop protection outcomes
- Engagement: Increasing connections and engagement with growers around the world
- Strengthening Codex: Supporting CCPR/JMPR (particularly with regard to crop group work, JMPR support, and preserving access to key older chemistries)
- Importance of Minor Uses: Building political will and a toolkit for governments to support minor use programs around the world
- Increasing impact: Incorporation of environmental and social/economic indicators/outcomes

- Creative and pragmatic solutions: Incorporation of biological solutions, residue mitigation projects, regional registrations, import tolerances, and others

### **FY 2024 Federal Appropriations Finally Completed**

All 12 of the FY 2024 appropriations bills were finally completed, albeit after four continuing resolutions and six months late. Overall research funding at the USDA will remain flat at \$3.5 billion. The Agriculture Research Service (ARS) will receive a small increase of 1.4 percent to \$1.84 billion, while the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will get a 1.3 percent cut to \$1.7 billion. The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative will be funded at \$445 million, roughly \$10 million below the FY 2023 enacted level.

For more details on research and science programs across all the major federal agencies, please visit the Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities (APLU's) federal budget and appropriations website. They provide an excellent [FY2024 Appropriations Priorities Summary Chart](#), which includes an overview of APLU's annual requests, as well as current funding levels, and congressional action.

### **EPA Pesticide Label Reform is Finally Happening**

On November 15, EPA released a whitepaper: "[Benefits of the Adoption of Structured Content and Digital Pesticide Labels](#)" and requested feedback on its plan to adopt digital pesticide labels that will make labeling information clearer, more consistent, and more accessible to users.

EPA's plan for digital labels covers the creation of both a structured label—which would provide a framework for consistently placing and ordering label information—and a digital label, which would organize the label information as electronic data. Currently, the pesticide product label registration process is mostly manual, with EPA staff reading through long, detailed label submissions to pull out specific information, like application rate, to enter into the EPA's Pesticide Product and Label System. This has led to time-consuming reviews and high cost to registrants and regulators. Further, the increasing complexity of pesticide labels and lack of standardized label format and language can create challenges for pesticide users and the public seeking information about which products to use and how to use them.

The National and Regional Weed Science Societies submitted the following [comments](#). Many thanks to Bill Chism and Stanley Culpepper in particular for their work on this document!

### **EPA Creates New Office to Better Connect with Agricultural Communities**

On March 1, 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it is establishing a new office to expand engagement with agricultural and rural communities. The creation of the first-ever EPA Office of Agriculture and Rural Affairs "represents the Biden-Harris Administration's ongoing commitment to improving environmental stewardship and economic opportunity for America's farmers and ranchers, as well as strengthening the vitality of small towns and rural communities," according to an EPA statement.

“Farmers and ranchers are crucial partners as we work together to deliver clean air, clear water and climate solutions, all while playing the critical role of ensuring an abundant fiber, fuel and food supply,” said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan. “With the launch of this new office, we are ensuring agricultural and rural stakeholders will continue to have a seat at the table for many years to come.”

The new office will forge practical, science-based solutions that protect the environment while ensuring a vibrant and productive agricultural system. The new office will also collaborate with small, underserved towns and rural communities that are seeking federal investments in infrastructure upgrades and other community-improvement opportunities. [EPA Press Release](#)

### **U.S. Geological Survey Reverses Course and Will Continue to Track Pesticide Usage**

The U.S. Geological Survey is dropping plans to scale back reporting to a widely used database that tracks the use of approximately 400 agricultural chemicals in the United States.

USGS had decided to reduce the scope of its Agricultural Pesticide-use Estimates and Maps data, which since 1992 had provided county-level data on the use of chemicals to control fungi, weeds, insects and other pests. The agency first reduced the number of tracked chemicals to 72, then said it would stop releasing preliminary pesticide use data annually and instead release final data every 5 years.

More than 250 scientists and 120 agencies signed letters protesting the move, and in late February USGS quietly reversed course. A note on the agency’s website says it will resume the annual publication of preliminary data for 400 compounds and that 2018–22 data will be published in 2025. [More on this story at Science.org](#)

### **BLM Receives Approval for Use of Seven Herbicides in 2024**

The National and Regional Weed Science Societies have been working with the Department of the Interior (DOI) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to get approval on final programmatic environmental impact statements (PEIS) for the use of the following seven herbicides on BLM land:

- |                        |               |
|------------------------|---------------|
| 1) aminocyclopyrachlor | 5) imazamox   |
| 2) clethodim           | 6) indaziflam |
| 3) fluazifop-p-butyl   | 7) oryzalin   |
| 4) flumioxazin         |               |

These herbicides have already been approved by EPA (some for a long time!), in adjoining nonfederal land. In order to for them to be considered as a management option on BLM lands, they had to be in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976.

These additional herbicide active ingredients will diversify BLM's weed management plan and help meet the purposes that were first identified in BLM’s 2007 and 2016 PEISs related to vegetation treatments. A [final record of decision](#) is expected in spring 2024.

### **USDA-ARS Weed Science News: Winter 2024 from Steve Young**

The winter 2024 edition of the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Weed Science Newsletter is now available at: <https://www.ars.usda.gov/people/steve-young-phd/weed-science-newsletter/weed-science-research-news-and-highlights/>

The winter issue highlights ARS weed science research in the Northeast, Midwest, Plains, Pacific West and the Southeast, highlights the work of Dr. Ali Wright at the ARS Sugarcane Research Unit in Houma, LA, and lists event and announcements including:

### **USDA ARS Weed Science Positions: Recent Hires**

**Casey Barickman** – ARS Natural Products Utilization Research Unit, Oxford, MS

**Olivia Landau** – ARS Wheat Health, Genetics, and Quality Research Unit, Pullman, WA

**Jens Beets** – ARS Invasive Species and Pollinator Health Research Unit, Albany, CA

**Vijaya Varanasi** – ARS Crop Production Systems Unit, Stoneville, MS

**Allen Dray** – ARS Invasive Plant Research Unit, Fort Lauderdale, FL

### **Current Openings:**

Weed Ecologist – [ARS Columbia Plateau Conservation Research Center](#), Pendleton, Oregon (TBD)

Weed Scientist – [ARS Northwest Sustainable Agroecosystems Research Unit](#), Pullman, Washington (TBD)

Lee Van Wychen, Ph.D.

Executive Director of Science Policy

Weed Science Society of America

5720 Glenmullen Pl, Alexandria, VA 22303

Cell: 202-746-4686

### **Meetings of the National and Regional Weed Science Societies**

Jul. 14 - 18, 2024 Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS), St. Petersburg, FL [www.apms.org](http://www.apms.org)

Dec. 1 – 4, 2024 International Weed Science Society (IWSS), Jerusalem, Israel [www.iwss.info](http://www.iwss.info)

Dec. 9 - 12, 2024 North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS), Kansas City, MO [www.ncwss.org](http://www.ncwss.org)

Jan. 6 - 10, 2025 Northeastern Weed Science Society (NEWSS), Annapolis, MD [www.newss.org](http://www.newss.org)

Jan. 20 - 23, 2025 Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS), Charleston, SC [www.swss.ws](http://www.swss.ws)

Feb. 24 - 27, 2025 Weed Science Society of America (WSSA), Vancouver, BC [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net)

Mar 10-13, 2025 Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS), Seattle, WA [www.wsweedscience.org](http://www.wsweedscience.org)