

Major Northeast Farm Support Program at Risk

A major program benefitting Northeast farmers is facing extinction unless Congress protects it in the upcoming farm bill. This program is called the "Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program." In a shortsighted decision, the USDA has cut key elements of the program completely. Overall the IPM budget has been cut at three times the rate of comparable programs. This decision must be reversed to protect the economic viability of Northeast farmers. IPM relies on a range of tactics -- including biological controls, scouting, traps and sprays -- to prevent unacceptable damage to crops while protecting farm profits as well human health and the environment.

IPM Critical to Northeast Farmers

The 38,000 specialty crop farms in the NE, whose crops are valued at \$5.8 billion annually, need to use pesticides. On the other hand, consumers want food as pesticide free as possible. IPM systems developed by land grant university experts enable our farmers to cut pesticide use to a minimum. This protects farmers' incomes. Eliminating one fungicide spray for apple scab early in the growing season saves about \$50 per acre.

Organic Not Enough

Because of local weather conditions, organic production is just not an option for many Northeast farmers. IPM addresses the consumers' concerns by minimizing pesticide use. That is why the Wegmans supermarket chain features IPM grown fruits and vegetables.

IPM Works

Sales grew nearly five-fold over three years for products grown under New England's IPM Eco Apple brand. The number of participating growers doubled. Don Dzen, a Connecticut berry grower commented, "Each year there's been something that paid for itself, something we were missing before." Rutgers University developed a new IPM system to protect New Jersey tomato growers from bacterial canker. The disease had inflicted losses of up to 50% for fresh market tomato crops, valued at \$28 million annually.

Cost Effectiveness

The amount spent for IPM is one-tenth of one percent of the farm program spending. In New York State (FY 2009), each federal IPM dollar leveraged \$11 in state and local funds.

An independent review team found that the four regional IPM Centers show an "*impressive use of limited resources to maximize output*" of projects. In 2006, the

review team advised USDA to use IPM Centers as a model for future programs.

What needs to be done

A Congressional representative from the Northeast needs to step forward and protect this vital program. Congress must affirm the importance of IPM by including an authorization for IPM funding at 2010 levels (\$24 million), reestablishing the position of national IPM coordinator and clarifying that promotion orders can support IPM activities.

For more information see <http://www.ipmvoice.org/about.htm> or call Jim Cubie at 843-928- 3702; 843-991-1059.