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NEWS Release

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IR-4 Sets Research Priorities for 2007

Indianapolis, IN was the site of the 2006 IR-4 Food Use Workshop. From September 12-14, 2006, 225 people representing State Agricultural Extension Service (SAES/Extension), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Commodity Groups, the Agri-chemical industry, the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Registration Division leaders and other interested groups met to agree upon and set priorities for residue research projects for the 2007 season. Workshop attendees discussed pest management needs for the control of insects, disease and weeds on specialty crops. IR-4 organized the discussion to allow a day for each discipline—Entomology, Plant Pathology and Weed Science.

This year a new procedure was implemented that streamlined the process. In past years, participants would spend almost an entire day developing consensus on the most important pest management needs of the country. Following this information gathering exercise, the group would then narrow the 200-300 proposed projects down to 12 "As", 36 "Bs" and unlimited "Cs". This year, the group was asked to forgo the information solicitation discussion and nominate high priority projects via email or the IR-4 website, and nominations were reviewed prior to the Workshop. Additionally, recognizing the need for information gathering, IR-4 set aside the mornings of the Workshop for each discipline to discuss general topics of concern regarding efficacy, phytotoxicity, emerging pests, seed treatments, application and new technologies. Members of the EPA Registration Division were also invited to participate in these discussion and often brought clarity to questions raised.

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The results of the new format of nominating high priority projects prior to the Workshop coupled with the general information sessions seemed to work well in significantly lessening the priority setting process. Post-workshop surveys suggest the new format was a big hit with comments ranging from, "I like the new format," from a major mid-western grower to, "Good Workshop! Well coordinated. Thanks," from an agricultural extension agent. While most favored the new process, one respondent suggested improvements for future Workshops, which included submitting a criterion for evaluating projects that would include information on alternative controls and providing a list of the number of commodities receiving the same priority. Overall, the respondents were very much in favor of the new format and will continue to join IR-4 for future workshops.

For a list of the 2007 IR-4 Food Use Workshop priorities, visit the IR-4 website at ir4.rutgers.edu.

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For over forty years, the IR-4 Project has been the major resource for supplying pest management tools for specialty crops by developing research data to support registration clearances. Its mission is to provide safe and effective pest management tools for specialty crop growers. For more information visit the IR-4 website at ir4.rutgers.edu.