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## IR-4 Highlights (Partner Outreach)

**Editor's Note: IR-4 Highlights by the Executive Director is an outreach feature of the Newsletter, focused primarily on articles in this issue.**

The first year of the new decade in a new century has been an exciting one for the IR-4 program. Those of you who are part of the program or are a key stakeholder know there is never a dull moment. The level of energy and enthusiasm at Headquarters as well as at the Regional and State levels never ceases to amaze me. It's great to be part of an organization that is beneficial to our entire society.

We started out the year with the issuance of a strategic plan entitled "Strategy for Meeting the Challenge of Pest Management on Minor Crops: 2001 to 2005" which was the result of stakeholder input through workshop sessions that were part of the symposium entitled "Future Approaches to Minor Crop Pest Management" held in conjunction with our 1999 Annual Meeting. That input along with several meetings and lots of discussion by the Project Management Committee resulted in the strategic plan which included a Mission Statement: "The IR-4 Mission is to provide pest management solutions to growers of fruit, vegetables and other minor crops. People who benefit from IR-4 are minor crop growers, food processors and consumers". This clear statement allows us to move ahead with the key initiatives in the strategic plan which are as follows: 1) Continued commitment to food-use and ornamental minor crop pest management; 2) Acceleration of new, reduced risk chemistry registration; 3) Speed access of new, safer chemistry for minor crop growers; 4) Help develop methyl bromide alternatives; 5) Expand efficacy trials especially on reduced risk chemistries and biopesticides; 6) Upgrade equipment and facilities at regional labs, field research centers and USDA-ARS facilities; and 7) Strengthen support for State Liaison Representatives and other stakeholders.

Expanded programs and new initiatives came with increased funding needs. The strategic plan asked Congress for \$2,500,000 additional support for the CSREES budget and \$1,000,000 more funding for our ARS partners. Unfortunately, no additional funding was included in the FY 2001 budget for CSREES to support the IR-4 program, so our operating budget for the majority of our program will remain at \$8,990,000 (actually a bit over \$8,400,000 after CSREES administration costs are taken off the top). This means that funding has not increased from CSREES for four years. The impact is starting to be felt in our upcoming year's program which contains fewer residue projects and field trials. However, there is some good news on the budget front! USDA-ARS

has granted \$1,000,000 in additional funding for the ARS minor crop program, its first increase since 1992. Dr. Nancy Ragsdale, USDA-ARS National Program Leader for Pest Management Chemistry, and Dr. Paul Schwartz, Staff Scientist in the Office of Minor Use Pesticides and the person in charge of the daily ARS operations, are working to allocate the new funds between the three ARS residue laboratories (Beltsville, MD, Tifton, GA, and Wapato, WA) and seven field research centers (Tifton, GA, Salinas, CA, Prosser, WA, Weslaco, TX, Wooster, OH, Charleston, SC and Wapato, WA) for support staff and equipment needs. From my personal perspective, if the program was to receive only one funding increase, it could not have been better targeted than to the ARS Team which has gone eight years without an increase while straining the past few years to keep up a high level of productivity, especially at the field level. The entire program could not function nearly as well without their contributions and leadership. Paul has been a long time member of the Project Management Committee (formerly Technical Committee serving as Chairman) while Nancy has been very active as the new ARS National Program Leader by putting together the justifications for funding increases and participating in PMC meetings. Thanks to both of them for their fine leadership and support for minor crop programs.

Our partnership initiatives this year focused mainly on the crop protection industry and the EPA. Our challenge has been to keep up with the mergers and consolidations which have taken place this past year which have essentially eliminated three major companies. American Cyanamid became part of BASF, AgrEvo and Rhone-Poulenc merged to form Aventis and Novartis and Zeneca combined to form Syngenta. From an industry perspective, these actions were huge because all six companies were in the top ten worldwide in the agrochemical business arena. However, we are fortunate to have fine IR-4 liaisons with each of the companies and good contacts with their senior management teams which have made the transitions easier. Obviously, our goal is to continue to keep minor crop needs at the forefront of our discussions with the companies on their new products as well as make sure ongoing projects are kept on our 30-month completion schedule. We look forward to continuing to work with the newly merged and consolidated companies as well as those who are not undergoing these transitions. Without these partners, we would not have any new chemistries to work with. Of course, we have not overlooked our biopesticide industry partners as we complete the second year of an expanded Biopesticide Research Program with 4 Early Stage and 33 Advanced Stage projects being supported. Some of the products supported by these projects received EPA approvals this year including Serenade from AgraQuest, Milsana from KHH BioSciences and Messenger or Harpin Protein from Eden Biosciences to name a few.

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These products have all performed well in the efficacy trials with our university researchers and should be ready for use in minor crop IPM programs (both pest control and resistance management) as well as by organic producers. I am personally looking forward to working with the Biopesticide Industry Alliance as an ad hoc member to help further their goals to improve global biopesticide perception, facilitate successful product registrations and develop industry standards for product quality and effectiveness.

Our partnerships with the EPA through the EPA/IR-4 Technical Working Group (TWG) continue to flourish and innovate. Since the initiation of the TWG in January 1999, we have met eight times with our Agency partners including four very productive meetings this year. The super crop group concept pioneered in 1999 with savings of over a \$1,000,000 for spinosad and azoxystrobin field trial and laboratory expenses resulted in 165 spinosad clearances in January 2000. Additional spinosad and a number of azoxystrobin clearances are expected in 2001 from this initiative. A similar concept with glyphosate resulted in 206 glyphosate minor crop clearances in September. For 2000, we have received 511 minor crop clearances for our stakeholders thanks to the Agency's partnership compared to the previous record of 313 clearances in 1999. We hope to break the new 2000 record next year as Willis Wheeler, IR-4 Liaison to OPP, and Dan Kunkel, Registrations Manager, work with

Pat Cimino and the EPA Minor Use Team to extract additional efficiencies to further seek improvements in our minor crop petition reviews. My personal thanks to Marcia Mulkey, Director of OPP, Jim Jones, Director of Registration Division, Margaret Stasikowski, Director of Health Effects Division, Pat Cimino, Minor Use Team Leader, Hoyt Jamerson, Minor Use Officer and their team members for the leadership and support for the EPA/IR-4 Technical Working Group and its initiatives.

Finally, we should recognize all of the IR-4 staff at the state, regional and national level who actively participated in our Annual Meeting held in Colorado Springs, Colorado in October prior to the National Research Planning Meeting held at IR-4 Headquarters in New Jersey to finalize the 2001 program. Without the dedication of all these fine people, the program would not be possible and I would not have as many positive things to write about.

Thanks to everyone who make the IR-4 program the success it is and an excellent example of cooperation between the USDA (ARS and CSREES) and the land grant university system. We can all take great satisfaction in being able to provide American and global consumers with the safest, most nutritious food supply in the world. Happy New Year!

Article by Bob Holm

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## IR-4 Headquarters Presentations

Bob Holm - "New Perspective for the Future of the IR-4 Program" Annual Meeting in Colorado Springs, Colorado 10/12, ISK Biosciences in Mentor, Ohio on 10/17 and to National IPM Committee Meeting in Washington, DC on 10/20.

Jack Norton, Bob Holm and Neal Thompson attended the 2000 Annual International Research Conference on Methyl Bromide Alternatives and Emissions Reduction November 6-9, 2000. Jack Norton presented a paper entitled "Review of IR-4 Methyl Bromide Alternative Program for Minor Crops". This paper was followed by presentations on IR-4's methyl bromide alternatives programs for strawberries by Dr. Michael Nelson, Plant Sciences, Inc. (PSI), Watsonville, California and on IR-4's methyl bromide alternatives programs for tomatoes by Dr. Bernard Olsen, PSI. Several references were made to the IR-4 MBA program during the four day conference which was attended by approximately 350 scientists from around the world.

### Trip/Meeting Reports by HQ Staff

- Homestead, Florida Trip Report by Michael Braverman
- The IR-4 Project - A Minor Use Program for Pest Management Solutions in the United States by Dave Thompson, Jerry Baron and Dan Kunkel presented by Dave at Brighton Conference, Brighton, England.
- 2000 Methyl Bromide Alternatives Outlook Conference Report by Bob Holm and Jack Norton
- The British Crop Protection Council Conference on Pests and Diseases 2000 Report by Dan Kunkel and Dave Thompson