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# Regional Pest Management Centers: The Foundation of a National Pest Management Information Network

The United States Department of Agriculture, through CSREES (Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service) has recently designated four regional Pest Management Centers in the U.S. The centers will strengthen USDA's connection with growers, research and extension programs and other stakeholders, by providing a pest management information network responsive to the needs of the public and private sectors. Issues such as regulatory restrictions, pest resistance, invasive species, biotechnology and pesticide use will be addressed. Each center is intended to be more virtual than brick/mortar by relying on a small core staff to work with cooperators from the region to:

- maximize the availability of dispersed expertise,
- enhance cooperation between disciplines and organizations,
- provide expert information, technology and education for growers, government agencies and others involved in agriculture and,
- reduce duplication of effort.

The Pest Management Centers incorporate CSREES' former Pesticide Impact Assessment Program (PIAP). Crop Profiles, initiated under the PIAP program, will continue to be developed by the centers with input from researchers, growers and commodity groups. The centers also support and assist with the development of Pest Management Strategic Plans (PMSPs). Both documents are extremely important as a means to identify crop/pest control alternatives in the event that FQPA-mandated tolerance reassessment leads to cancellation of critical pest control tools. A Crop Profile provides the complete production story for a commodity. Using Crop Profiles as a starting point, many state and national commodity groups are producing crop-specific Pest Management Strategic Plans. The PMSP summarizes the critical pest management needs of the commodity, efficacy of current practices/tools, and the feasibility of identified alternatives. It is, in essence, a roadmap of the future direction for pest management within a specific crop. Both USDA and EPA already depend heavily on the Crop Profiles and PMSPs when pesticide decisions are pending.

The Pest Management Centers are located at the University of California - Davis (Directors: Rick Melnicoe and Frank Zalom), Pennsylvania State/Cornell Universities (Directors: John Ayers and Jim VanKirk), Michigan State University/University of Illinois (Directors: Larry Olsen and Mike Gray) and the University of Florida (Directors: Norm Nesheim and Russ Mizell). An excellent website (<http://www.pmcenters.org>) contains all of the Crop Profiles and PMSPs by region and by state as well as other noteworthy information.

Over the next several issues of the Newsletter we will give each Pest Management Center a chance to introduce themselves and their specific activities. The first feature is the North Central Region Pest Management Center.

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## North Central Region Pest Management Center

Larry G. Olsen and Mike Gray - Co-Directors  
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The North Central Region Pest Management Center (NCPMC) was established officially in 2000 to coordinate a network of scientists who can provide data to personnel at the EPA and USDA. These data may be used to enhance the decision-making process of policy makers responsible for pesticide risk assessments and also used to improve pest management programs. Through a formal grant program, a request for proposals was circulated. Proposals were submitted, reviewed, and subcontracts awarded that enabled grantees (project leaders) to establish a 12-state information network within the north central region. For 2001, project leaders are responding to information requests from the USDA and EPA, conducting 18 surveys of pesticide use and pest management adoption, revising and preparing 29 crop profiles, and developing six new Pest Management Strategic Plans (PMSPs). When completed, these will be added to the regional web site at <http://www.pmcenters.org/Northcentral/> where all existing information, profiles and plans can be viewed. A mini-grant proposal was funded that will enable entomologists in the North Central Region to communicate with clientele on the current distribution of the soybean aphid. This internet mapping program, designed to track the spread of a new and emerging pest, may serve as a prototype for other invasive pest species in the future. The mapping routine can be accessed at <http://www.pmcenters.org/Northcentral/> under "News and Alerts". An IPM Facilitator who will work closely with the NC IPM Coordinators will be hired to coordinate the Pest Management Center Advisory Committee meetings and organize stakeholder workshops. The stakeholder workshops are designed to solicit input on the future development of agroecosystem centers and to prioritize pest management needs for the region. Scientists within the North Central Pest Management Center will work closely with other pest management agencies and organizations such as IR-4 to facilitate the coordination of pest management activities and programs in the region.

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