



Pest Management Solutions
for Specialty Crops and
Specialty Uses

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Path Forward Communique IV May 2017

This is the fourth in a series of updates on activities with IR-4's Path Forward Working Group that was established to comprehensively consider how IR-4 can best operate after years of flat/decreasing funding; a changing budgetary environment in the Land-grant institutions; challenging regulatory requirements; and evolving industry needs.

What has IR-4 done to address its limited resources?

Based on the recommendations of the 2016 Organizational Assessment Panel ([link to full report](#)), IR-4 has implemented two workgroups to assess operations and provide suggested improvements and efficiencies. The field project workgroup, representing all facets of IR-4 field research, explored areas where field data books are processed through the system. Some of their suggestions to improve efficiencies include:

- Enhanced training for new Field Research Directors
- Study Directors convening conference calls with study participants to discuss specifics of research protocols
- Providing Quality Control reviewers with feedback

IR-4's analytical laboratory chemists were asked to perform a self-assessment of their operations. They provided comments on targeted and open-ended questions. These comments were compiled and shared with the IR-4 Residue Research Directors. Each laboratory was tasked to create an action plan for improvement, including bench marks for evaluation, a list of major analytical instruments and identified key personnel. Debbie Carpenter will be visiting all the laboratories over the next several months to assist in implementation of the action plan and additional suggestions for improvement.

IR-4 was successful in securing some additional funding from USDA-Foreign Agriculture Service to assist in data development. These new funds (approximately \$500,000 annually for the next four years) will provide IR-4 with the resources to develop additional data, required by international trading partners, to harmonize their pesticide regulatory approvals with the US. This will give specialty crop farmers assurances that pesticide approvals in the US will not be a barrier of trade. This grant provides funding that allows IR-4 to add approximately 31 field trials to its domestic work plan.

Finally, I am making more visits to Washington to meet with key influencers. Over the past few months, I have met with Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, USDA-ARS Administrator, Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy, NIFA Director and Dr. Jay Vroom, Executive Director of CropLife America. I attended (along with several CLC members) NIFA's Tactical Sciences Workshop and lastly, John Wise and I represented IR-4 at a reception that highlighted agriculture research for Congress.

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IR-4 Project Commodity Liaison Committee Support

In 2016, the IR-4 Commodity Liaison Committee (CLC) established a subcommittee to better strategize the entire CLC's efforts to secure appropriate funding for IR-4. This subcommittee maintains monthly conference calls to keep current with actions. Over the past year, they have accomplished much, including:

- Creating a concise one-page document that explains IR-4, its attributes and its funding needs
- Produced a training program for less experienced CLC members on how to conduct Congressional visits.
- Coordinated visits with key staff of relevant Congressional Committees

The CLC is currently exploring the benefits, risk and feasibility of moving the IR-4 budget line from the annual discretionary appropriation process and into the mandatory Farm Bill funding line. The CLC-Congressional Subcommittee facilitated Farm Bill 101 training on May 17, 2017. Katie Naessens, of the Senate Agriculture Committee staff spoke about the potential transition and answered questions from the IR-4 Project team. There was clear consensus that IR-4 should remain a budget line in the annual appropriations to USDA-NIFA while potentially seeking Farm Bill funds to cover specific research areas such as international harmonization of Maximum Residue Levels.

The PMC and the CLC also participated in a conference call with USDA-NIFA Director, Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy to discuss the status of the Tactical Sciences Initiative. Dr. Ramaswamy will be establishing a small subcommittee, whose goal is to develop a document detailing a vision for the Initiative, proposed outcomes and recommended commensurate funding. Invites will be going out soon and Sonny expects that that IR-4 will have a representative on the Tactical Science Initiative subcommittee. The CLC and the PMC agreed that IR-4 should remain engaged with the Tactical Science initiative.

All for now
Jerry

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