Fruit IPM Program Presented with Distinguished Service to New Jersey Agriculture Award

The New Jersey Farm Bureau recently awarded, on November 14th, the "Distinguished Service to New Jersey Agriculture Award" to the entire Fruit IPM delivery team at the annual Farm Bureau Convention banquet. Those present were Dean Polk (accepting the award), David Schmitt, Atanas Atanassov, Win Cowgill, Gary Pavlis and Peter Nitzsche.

The NJAES/Rutgers Cooperative Extension Fruit Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program is a team effort that delivers IPM information and services to NJ fruit growers, helping them produce fruit and manage pests in an economically sustainable fashion. The program uses multiple technologies to manage pests and minimize pesticide use. IPM program staff combine with specialists and county agents to provide an educational delivery program, driven by current research in NJ and other states. The program is supported by state funds, federal competitive grants, and grower/industry grants and fees.

The core staff for program delivery consists of a statewide agricultural IPM agent, Dean Polk, and 3 full time program associate staff. Eugene Rizio in Atlantic County has blueberry responsibilities in Atlantic and Burlington Counties. David Schmitt in Gloucester County has tree fruit and grape responsibilities in Gloucester, Cumberland, Salem, Camden, Burlington and Atlantic Counties. Atanas Atanassov in Hunterdon County is responsible for tree fruit growers in Hunterdon, Warren, Mercer, Monmouth, Middlesex, Morris, Bergen, Somerset, and Sussex Counties. Unlike extension in most other states, our program centers on the weekly delivery of farm scouting information to the

Left to right: Atanas Atanassov; Dean Polk; Win Cowill; Gary Pavlis; Peter Nitzsche; Rich Nieuwenhuis, president, New Jersey Farm Bureau, and Dave Schmidt.

commercial grower. The scouting and monitoring information is backed up with interpretation and recommendations to the grower for control and management decisions. Recommendations are through written reports, faxes, emails, or one-on-one discussion. Monitoring data is summarized for weekly articles in extension newsletters, grower update and annual meetings. Growers or grower organizations contribute funds that pay for seasonal technicians/field scouts, insect traps and other supplies, transportation and vehicle maintenance and portions of staff salary if needed. The core staff focuses on seasonal scouting for insects and disease, weeds (program dependent), management recommendations, regular communication with the growers, fertility sampling, and weekly newsletters.

Researchers and subject matter Extension Specialists provide back-up for production issues, assist in staff training, and conduct IPM research from which results are used within the delivery program as recommendations, monitoring procedures, or other knowledge required for successful management. The program represents a 2 way approach where delivery staff share on-farm information, and collaborate on research projects, which results in improved research and overall extension programming for clientele. Researchers and extension specialists continuously involved in the program include: Peter Oudemans, Plant Pathology (blueberries, grapes), Cesar Rodriguez-Saona, Specialist in Entomology (blueberries, grapes), Bradley Majek, Specialist in Weed Science (blueberries, tree fruit, grapes), Norman Lalancette, Specialist in Plant Pathology (tree fruit), Daniel Ward, Specialist in Pomology (tree fruit and grapes), and George Hamilton, Specialist in Pest Management (tree fruit and coordinator for federal and state funding).

County based agricultural agents interface with their growers, and provide expertise on plant growth regulators, fertility management, and other horticultural practices that may impact IPM decisions. County agents who provide regular input include Gary Pavlis in Atlantic County for blueberries, Jerome Frecon in Gloucester County for tree fruit, Winfred Cowgill in Hunterdon County for tree fruit, and Peter Nitzsche in Morris County.

Grower participation is at 2 levels. Primary participants have all or part of their acreage enrolled in the program for scouting and recommendations; get IPM reports, fruit quality analyses, tailored fertility recommendations, and end of year pesticide use reports. All fruit growers can get newsletters, attend meetings, or receive emails and faxes where IPM information is summarized and discussed with general recommendations. Secondary participants are all other growers getting IPM information, but not enrolled in the scouting program.

During 2011 the fruit IPM program worked with 88 growers as primary participants, consisting of 41 blueberry growers, 41 tree fruit growers, and 6 wine grape producers. Participating farms made up 66% of total NJ blueberry acreage, and about 80-85% of total peach and apple acreage.

The program is information intensive. Fruit growers now rely on narrow spectrum and expensive pesticides that must be timed for specific pest stages and managed to avoid pest resistance. This means growers must know more about the biology of pests, make use of pest levels and treatment thresholds, insect and disease degree day phenology models and other environmental monitoring tools, various pheromone technologies, and have a knowledge of beneficial insects and biological controls. IPM goals are to bring these factors together into one management program. However, the recent arrival of 2 invasive species, the brown marmorated stink bug, and the spotted wing drosophila are refocusing program efforts to the more intense control tactics that will have to be used for these insects. In the coming years the NJ fruit industry will require more applied research and increased collaborative efforts with other states, and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture to help solve these issues.

For further information contact:
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