Expansion of the Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group

Project Coordinator

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on behalf of the Northeast IPM Vegetable Working Group

Project Type: IPM Working Groups

Project Summary

The vegetable industry in the Northeast consists of at least 12,000 farms that cultivate and harvest over 370,000 acres of vegetable crops annually. The Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group (Vegetable IWG) was established in 2002 under the umbrella of the Northeast Pest Management Center. The group represents a diverse type of vegetable farmers, consultants, marketing specialists, processors, extension personnel, state agencies, and other agricultural professionals from the Northeast Region. The mission of the Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group is to foster the development and use of IPM as a means to achieve ecological and economic sustainability of vegetable farms in the Northeast. At our annual meeting in November 2009 it was decided upon to restructure the Vegetable Working Group in order to strengthen our capacity and further our reach to stakeholders in the entire Northeast region. In doing so, a ‘new’ working group model will be enable us to foster stronger relationships between our membership and the vegetable community. The new working group will include an Advisory Committee, a Steering Committee and the working group membership. A website and listserv will be developed to act as a conduit of information and expertise for the vegetable industry in the Northeast. In addition to the restructuring of the working group and outreach platforms, the group will continue to meet on an annual basis to foster the core mission of the working group.
Problem, Background and Justification

The vegetable industry in the Northeast consists of at least 12,000 farms that cultivate and harvest over 370,000 acres of vegetables (2002 Census of Agriculture). These figures do not include potatoes, strawberries, or greenhouse vegetable crops, which are important components on many vegetable farms. Farms range in size from 1 acre to >2000 acres, and vegetables are marketed in many ways including processing, through wholesale distributors or direct to supermarkets and institutions, as well as retail through farm stands, farmers markets, restaurants, and Community Supported Agriculture. Relative to field crops, vegetables have a high value per acre ranging from about $1500 per acre for wholesale processing vegetables to >$30,000 per acre for intensively grown fresh market retail crops. As land values increase and farmers seek higher value crops with more market potential to help sustain their farms, farmers often turn from other commodities to vegetable production. Quality demands are high in vegetable production, and effective pest management is critically important to meet market and consumer demands. Integrated pest management, when implemented through an on-farm monitoring program, has proven to help save money, reduce health and environmental risks, and provide effective control of damaging pests.

The Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group was established in 2002 under the umbrella of the Northeast Pest Management Center. The group currently, and in the past, represents diverse types of vegetable farmers, as well as extension personnel, crop consultants, marketing specialists, processors, state agency personnel, and other agricultural professionals from the Northeast Region. (Appendix A). Our mission and goals are as follows:

**Mission Statement.** The mission of the Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group is to foster the development and use of IPM as a means to achieve ecological and economic sustainability of vegetable farms in the Northeast. Our goals are:

1. Identify and prioritize regional vegetable and strawberry IPM needs, in particular gaps in research, extension and regulation.

2. Represent the views of vegetable and strawberry farmers and other stakeholders to the Northeast IPM Center.

3. Develop, facilitate or implement appropriate research and educational projects that address work group priorities.

4. Strengthen partnerships and exchange of information among vegetable farmers, agricultural professionals, and other stakeholders throughout the Northeast region.

**Update on activities.** The following activities and projects have been undertaken by the Vegetable Working Group. Some have been completed, while others are in progress.

1. **Annual meeting.** The vegetable working group successfully held its eighth annual meeting on November 11-12, 2009 in Newark, DE. Twelve members were present including extension personnel, vegetable growers, industry representatives along with a representative from the Northeastern IPM Center. Members in attendance were Andy
2. Educator Exchange Program.
In 2009, educator exchange travel grants, now called the IPM Travel Grants Program were awarded to two individuals in the Northeast Region. Travel grants were awarded to Judson Reid, an extension associate with the Cornell Vegetable Program, who attended the International Symposium on High Technology for Greenhouse Systems in Quebec City in June. A second award given to Brian Eshenaur, an associate in the Cornell IPM Program, allowed him to attend The Weed Science School at UC Davis. Another travel grant was accepted, but the individual could not attend the meeting and the funds were not awarded. A fourth application for a travel grant award was declined in 2009. Since its inception over 20 travel grants (~$15,000) have been awarded to educators to attend out-of-region conferences, workshops, and one-on-one mentoring opportunities. By allowing educators to attend these meetings and/or workshops to learn new knowledge at least 5,000 stakeholders in the Northeast have been reached through this program.

3. Publication of the Northeast Vegetable and Strawberry Pest Identification Guide.
With funding from the Northeast IPM Center Partnership grants program and EPA Region I Strategic Agriculture Initiative, the working group completed the Northeast Vegetable and Strawberry Pest Identification Guide in late November 2007. These pest identification guides were distributed free of charge in 2008 and 2009 with commercial vegetable recommendations guides that were purchased by and/or given to commercial and organic vegetable growers in the Northeast region. The Northeast Vegetable and Strawberry Pest Identification Guide has become an important tool for many vegetable growers, crop consultants, crop advisors, and extension personnel with ~10,000 guides being distributed throughout the Northeast region. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that many groups have offered and were willing to purchase the guide (even though it has been offered free of charge). Vegetable growers, crop consultants and extension educators have successfully used the guide to help identify important pests and allow for improved pest control. A goal of the re-organized working group will be to have this guide updated and available for free on the internet through the newly developed vegetable IPM working group website.

Membership. Our success depends upon being an engaged, energetic group with membership that rotates on a regular basis. Our annual meeting with two days of face-to-face interaction is the heart of our group’s existence. Newest members who have agreed to serve, include a representative of the processing industry (Ken Martin, Furmano Foods, PA), an independent crop consultant (Tom Coleman, DE), and an Extension Specialist in Vegetable Pathology (Andy Wyenandt, Rutgers University). The new members have provided fresh ideas from around the region, while ongoing members provide the continuity and the functionality of an established team. The group works well together, hearing each other’s diverse views and reaching consensus to move forward. In November 2009, Andy Wyenandt (NJ) agreed to chair the Vegetable IPM Working Group. Tim Elkner (PA) continues to provide leadership for the
Educator Exchange program. A current list of working group members is provided in Appendix A.

**Priority Needs for Vegetable IPM in the Region.** Our recommendations on priority needs for IPM on vegetable farms in the Northeast are reviewed and updated annually and posted on the Northeast IPM website (http://www.northeastipm.org/work_vegpriority.cfm). Part I identifies the general needs or barriers in infrastructure, tools, or information that should be addressed. Part II lists the priority insects, diseases, weeds and general production problems that need more research or extension work to be effectively and safely managed through an IPM approach.

**Sustainability.** The Vegetable IWG would not exist and would not have accomplished anything without the consistent financial support that we have received from the Northeastern IPM Center. We recognize that there are many demands upon the Center’s resources and that we need to find alternative sources of funding to sustain our work over the long term. We believe that there are other agencies and grant programs that will value and support the work that we do, and we plan to seek funding for meetings and projects that will take place after the term of this grant proposal, which will end in Spring 2011. Of course, other funding sources may require a slight shift in direction and focus of the working group. The funding requested in this proposal will provide a necessary bridge for the re-structuring of the current working group model. The re-organized working group model is better suited for allowing working group members to form consortia to better address the needs of the northeast vegetable industry and to provide a much broader foundation system to seek funding opportunities from a number of outside funding agencies.

**Objectives and Anticipated Impacts.**

**Objective 1. Restructuring of the Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group in order to strengthen our capacity to accomplish our mission to support the vegetable industry in the Northeast region.**

At our annual meeting in November 2009 it was decided upon to restructure the Vegetable Working Group in order to strengthen our capacity and further our outreach to all stakeholders in the vegetable industry in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic regions. In doing so, the working group will be able to foster stronger relationships between our membership and the vegetable community which will allow the working group and membership to strengthen our core mission.
The new working group will include an Advisory Committee, a Steering Committee and the working group membership. The Advisory committee will consist of one or two individuals from each of the thirteen Northeast states, thus this committee will consist of 13 to 26 members. In doing so, each state will have at least one individual which represents themselves in the working group. The Steering Committee will include members of the current vegetable Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group which will help facilitate the implementation of the new working group model. These members have agreed to stay in their current roles for the next two years to help provide a clean transition during the current restructuring. Members of the Advisory and Steering Committees will agree to serve 3 year terms.

**New Working Group Membership:** In the past a group of dedicated individuals have made the current model of the working group succeed in many different areas of extension, teaching and education. Due the current constraints and burdens (i.e. academic and economical) placed upon the individuals which play important roles in the vegetable production industry the working group felt in necessary to evaluate the current working group model. In the past, particular individuals were invited to join the working group as current members vacated their position. This has kept the working group to 12 to 15 members since its inception. Albeit useful, the reach of the working group has been somewhat limited in its breadth of expertise and reach to stakeholders in the vegetable industry in the Northeast. With this in mind, the Northeast Vegetable Working Group has decided to develop and follow a model similar to the Great Lakes Vegetable Working Group (http://glvwg.ag.ohio-state.edu/) which has been successful for a number of years. The coordinator of the Great Lakes Vegetable Working, Mr. Jim Jasinski, Vegetable IPM Program, The Ohio State University, has established a very successful working group and networking program with the development of a regional website and listserv that is open to stakeholders in the North Central region (and beyond). Members of the working group share their areas of expertise with each other and stakeholders. Importantly, stakeholders seeking
information on a given topic can find that information through a particular individual or the entire working group. This facet of their working group is a valuable asset to all stakeholders in the vegetable industry in the North Central Region, and would be of equally important value to stakeholders throughout the Northeast.

**Approach and Procedures.**

In the fall of 2011, after the development of a new website an announcement will be sent out to all stakeholders in the vegetable industry in the Northeast region. The announcement will ask interested individuals to sign up for the Northeast Vegetable IPM Listserv which will serve as a conduit for information for the vegetable industry in the Northeast. The listserv will allow members of the working group and stakeholders throughout the Northeast region to disseminate important information and discuss and address current issues in a timely manner. Once a listserv is established, the Steering Committee (current members of the working group) will seek individuals to serve on the Advisory Committee which will consist of one or two individuals from each state. The Advisory Committee will include individuals from academics, industry and growers from throughout the Northeast region which will provide expertise in ALL areas of vegetable production (i.e. pathologists, entomologists, weed scientists, chemical company representatives, vegetable grower’s). Like the Steering Committee, individuals on the Advisory Committee will agree for a three year term and be asked to share their areas of expertise with stakeholders throughout the region via the website and listserv. The role of the Steering Committee members will be to i) set forth the mission/initiatives of the working group ii) facilitate ideas of the working membership, and iii) act as liaisons between the vegetable stakeholders and membership. Members of the Advisory Committee will act as i) state liaisons for stakeholders, ii) set forth the mission of the working group for their state, iii) report to/update membership on ongoing/interesting information from their state and iv) act as a source of knowledge in their areas of expertise for the working group. Members of both the Advisory and Steering Committees will then be tasked with furthering the mission of the working group by fostering ideas which will hopefully lead innovative ideas and important research projects for the vegetable industry in the Northeast. Importantly, all members of the working group will now have the ability to seek expertise and knowledge, and work closely together in areas of interest to help facilitate the development of regional, multi-state research projects and grants. General membership into the group will be open to any stakeholder who wishes to participate in the group. We expect that for most, this will only include being listed on the working group listserv. For others, more participation in the group may be desired and these individuals may be interested in being a source of knowledge and serving on the Advisory Committee or Steering Committee. We expect at least 150 to 200 stakeholders from the Northeast region to participate in the newly formed working group.

**Time Table:**

**Spring 2011**

- Current VWG members continue discussion of ideas for newly established working group model and website.
• Finalize details of roles of individual members, advisory committee and steering committee members

• The current working group is scheduled to meet in March 2011 to discuss and finalize details of the re-organized working group.

Summer 2011

• Discuss format of new Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group website

• Develop website/enter content(review website

Fall 2011

• Announce launch of new Vegetable IPM Working Group website and listserv

• Seek new membership to working group

• Fill (rest of) steering committee and advisory committee seats

• Late fall (November) current group members meet to discuss new membership, roles of steering and advisory committees, set advisory committee, and direction of group. Establish grant writing teams for 2011/12 grant cycle.

Evaluation Plans.

The success of the newly restructured Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group will be measured by the participatory actions of the individuals who involve themselves in the organization. To this point, the current working group model has been extremely successful in determining the needs and implementing some of the actions set forth by stakeholders in the Northeast region. This is easily seen in the development and distribution of over 10,000 Pest Identification guides to stakeholders in the Northeast region, and by the success of the IPM Travel Grants which have been awarded in the past few years, as well as, successful annual meetings and joint meetings with NRCS. The new working group model will allow the Vegetable IPM Working Group to reach a much wider stakeholder audience and bring expertise in all aspects of vegetable production closer together. A logic model is provided in Appendix B.