

Resources

Contacts

- IPM state coordinators: www.ipmcenters.org/intranet/directories/IPMdirectory.cfm
- SARE state coordinators: www.sare.org/coreinfo/coordinators.htm
- Regional IPM Center personnel: www.ipmcenters.org/personnel.cfm
- Cooperative Extension county offices: <http://npic.orst.edu/countyext.htm>
- EPA's Strategic Agricultural Initiative: www.epa.gov/opp00001/grants/aginitiative.htm
- EPA's Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program: <http://www.epa.gov/pestp/>
- Grocery Manufacturers Association, Environmental Sustainability Summit: www.gmaonline.org/events/2008/sustainability/index.htm

Pest and crop management, funded projects

- IPM resources (based on land grant information) by pest or crop: http://northeastipm.org/ipm_searchform.cfm
- SARE's national website (database of funded projects, print and electronic books and bulletins): www.sare.org

IPM guidelines

- Compilation of northeastern and other guidelines: http://northeastipm.org/ipm_checklist.cfm
- Compilation of national/international guidelines: http://ipminstitute.org/Fed_Agency_Resources/IPM_elements_guidelines.htm
- A draft ANSI (American National Standards Institute) standard for sustainable agriculture has been proposed and is currently in a three-year review and comment process.

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On the cover, Frank Muller—who grows food as part of a national sustainable/IPM program—shows dozens of suppliers from around the country the leguminous cover crops that return nitrogen to his soil.

PARTNERING WITH THE FOOD INDUSTRY ON SUSTAINABILITY AND IPM

Suggestions for IPM and SARE Coordinators

Food industry: focused on sustainability

Many currents are moving the food industry toward greater sustainability. Food suppliers and growers are using innovative approaches to respond to consumer and stockholder preferences. As companies explore the possibilities of corporate social responsibility, some are looking to land grant institutions for guidance. At the same time, governmental entities such as the USDA and the EPA are funding integrated pest management (IPM) research and demonstration projects, as well as providing IPM expertise to interested stakeholders. Together, customers, growers, food industries, land grant institutions, the government, nongovernmental organizations, and other key partners are collaborating on sustainable agriculture in the U.S.

Sustainable agriculture seeks profitable farms, environmental stewardship, and enhanced quality of life for farm families and their communities. Sustainable practices vary from region to region, state to state, and even farm to farm. Nonetheless, common sets of practices have emerged, many of them aimed at greater use of local resources, crop and livestock diversification, organic farming, and on-farm energy conservation.

The food industry is actively involved in retooling how food is grown, processed, transported, and sold. Any sector of the food supply chain—from growers and fresh-product handlers to food processors and brokers—could be involved in the transition. These suppliers might look for information on

- farming practices that improve soil quality through cover cropping and rotational grazing;
- how to use integrated pest management;
- best management practices for water use and protecting water quality; or
- ways to treat farm workers fairly.

Who might contact land grants?

Land grants might need to provide expertise to

- National or regional food marketers and distributors, such as Aramark, ConAgra, General Mills, Inc., Sodexho, SYSCO Corporation, and Unilever. Some are already developing or implementing programs, or participating in third-party assessments, with land grant involvement. Food suppliers may seek help with Life Cycle Analyses and with identifying the environmental and social impacts of their industry.
- Nonprofit organizations like Protected Harvest, Food Alliance, and Shade Coffee, which certify growers who use environmental and social production standards.
- Large cooperatives (e.g., National Grape, Ocean Spray), regional cooperatives (e.g., Northern Lights Vegetable Cooperative; Rocky Mountain Sugar Growers Cooperative), and local cooperatives may need expertise to develop standards.
- Private, third-party auditors such as SGS Group and Noraxx; they design food audits and standards.

How are land grants helping?

Land grant personnel are assisting growers, suppliers, and industry by providing technical expertise and unbiased, research-based pest management guidelines. States such as New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Ohio have developed and shared guidelines that help define IPM and sustainable practices. Land grant professionals have helped grower groups form sustainable programs and businesses, such as Eco Apple™, Mauna Kea Banana, and Hood River Integrated Fruit Production. Projects can range from self assessments to product specifications and third-party evaluations.

The Regional IPM Centers, SARE, EPA, and land grant specialists collaborated on this brochure

Who's who in food industry stewardship

Many private and public institutions have been involved in food industry stewardship. To name just a few...

Beyond Pesticides
 California Sustainable Winegrowing Program
 Campbell's
 Certimex
 Environmental Protection Agency (especially the Strategic Agricultural Initiative and the Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program)
 Eurepgap Grower groups/Cooperatives
 Food Alliance
 Forest Stewardship Council
 IPM Canada
 Land grant institutions
 Lodi Woodbridge Winegrape Commission
 Low Input Viticulture and Enology
 National Potato Council
 Protected Harvest
 Rainforest Alliance
 Red Tomato (Eco Apple™)
 Stemilt
 SYSCO Corporation
 Unilever
 USDA
 World Wildlife Fund Canada

- Projects serve as a springboard and justification for longer term, more stable funding (e.g., from legislatures and granting agencies) for IPM and sustainable programs.
- Administrators, legislators, and funders could become more aware of how IPM and sustainable programs keep growers competitive.
- Projects demonstrate the land grant mission of protecting the environment, contributing to a vibrant agricultural system, keeping farms profitable, and encouraging a food production system that is relevant to consumer needs.

What are the potential pitfalls?

Despite the advantages of partnering with industry on sustainability, the process can sometimes strain even long-standing professional relationships. As you implement a program...

- Be prepared to explain the value of extensive recordkeeping. Growers may wonder why they are being singled out to document their practices; they could feel they have already adopted the best practices to grow their crops profitably and with low environmental impact. (In the long term, growers will probably tell you that they were resistant at the start, but are better growers because of the records they were required to keep.)
- Be aware that food companies may base some decisions (for example, whether or not to allow genetically modified foods) on concerns of consumers, rather than on science.
- Be ready to help growers understand why food companies would try to influence nonagricultural practices, such as labor management (which is a component of several programs).

- Understand that grower groups sometimes worry that identifying certain products as “grown with IPM” or “grown with sustainable methods” can make products without those designations look inferior. Preparing for these situations and being able to spend time with all parties will take an investment. In the long-term, you will help growers to continue to document on-farm sustainability and IPM practices.

How can land grants ensure success?

By following the steps in the diagram below, food companies and coordinators can help to ensure that a project thrives. Successful projects shed a positive light on land grants, food companies, and growers. They also demonstrate how the groups can—and should—work together to improve profitability and protect the environment.

What are the benefits of helping industry?

- The food industry promotes IPM and sustainable practices and can help document supplier adoption.
- Food processors and growers increase their adoption of IPM and sustainable practices.
- Information is recorded in a standard fashion; data can be used for federal or state reporting.
- Products identified as having IPM or sustainable qualities can earn benefits in the marketplace.
- The food industry can bolster land grant efforts through letters of support that indicate the value of land grant work.

