

 **NEWS RELEASE**

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**USDA AGENCIES SIGN NATIONAL CLEAN PLANT NETWORK
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

WASHINGTON, March 26, 2009--Three U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies today announced that a National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) has been established at the department. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) have signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperatively support NCPN research, quarantine and outreach activities.

Under the agreement, APHIS, ARS and CSREES will work closely together, as well as with university, nonprofit and industry stakeholders to create new, and support existing, NCPN activities. Some of these activities include:

- Developing the science needed to support pest-free status in plants, by improving molecular diagnostic technologies, therapy and relevant taxonomy and systematic studies;
- Identifying plant diseases and supporting the disease-free status of plants in national plant germplasm collections,
- Developing the methods and technologies to treat diseased plants; and
- Establishing and supporting a general outreach program, including regional and specific plant/commodity centers, networks and working groups.

The NCPN, as required by the 2008 Farm Bill, is a collaborative venture, composed of diagnostic, therapeutic and horticultural expertise. NCPN's goal is to ensure the availability of high quality propagated plant material that is free of plant pests, helping to ensure the global competitiveness of specialty crop producers. The NCPN promotes pest and disease free specialty crops, the rapid and safe introduction of new varieties from foreign sources and hygienic U.S. products for export.

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