

2008 Farm Bill: Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention

BACKGROUND

On May 22, H.R. 6124 *Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008*, otherwise known as the Farm Bill, became law. Within Title X, Horticulture and Organic Agriculture, Section 10201, *Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention*, the Secretary is directed to make available Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds to implement this Section incrementally, starting with \$12 million in fiscal year (FY) 09, \$45 million in FY10, and \$50 million in FY11 and thereafter.

The Farm Bill requires the Secretary to do the following under this section:

- (1) In consultation with the National Plant Board and other interested parties, to enter into a cooperative agreement with each State department of agriculture that agrees to conduct early plant pest detection and surveillance activities.
- (2) To establish a threat identification and mitigation program to determine and address threats to the domestic production of crops. In conducting the threat identification and mitigation program, the Secretary must develop risk assessments of the potential threat to the agricultural industry of the United States from foreign sources, collaborate with the National Plant Board, and implement action plans for high consequence plant pests and diseases.
- (3) To provide funds and technical assistance to specialty crop growers, organizations representing specialty crop growers, and State and local agencies working with specialty crop growers and organizations for the development and implementation of audit-based certification systems and nursery plant pest risk management systems, in collaboration with the nursery industry, research institutions, and other entities to address plant pests.

Within 10201 is a subsection addressing an “Early Plant Pest Detection and Surveillance Improvement Program.” That subsection directs the USDA to evaluate whether a State department of agriculture is in a State that has a high risk of being affected by one or more plant pests or diseases, taking into consideration:

- I. the number of international ports of entry in the State;
- II. the volume of international passenger and cargo entry into the State;
- III. the geographic location of the State and if the location or types of agricultural commodities produced in the State are conducive to agricultural pest and disease establishment due to the climate, crop diversity, or natural resources (including unique plant species) of the State; and
- IV. whether the Secretary has determined that an agricultural pest or disease in the State is a Federal concern.

Shortly after the passage of the 2008 Farm Bill, APHIS commissioned its scientists to begin to examine risks using the criteria of Section 10201. Subsequently, APHIS began sharing those results in 2009 with Federal, State and industry stakeholders who participated in a dialogue with APHIS about ideas to continue to implement Section 10201 in fiscal year 2010. Reports generated from that effort to analyze risks were and continue to be used to facilitate a dialogue about the risks and pathways of introduction including offshore sources. One report, “Comparative Risk Analysis for the 50 U.S. States”

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(September 10, 2009) summarized State-level data with a resulting ranking of States using aggregated risk ratings. It provided a standardized assessment and review of data pertinent to potential pest introduction and to provide a common point for communication about associated risks and pathways from invasive plant pests between Federal and State governments and the related industry stakeholders. It was not used to determine state-by-state funding levels.

APHIS has been improving its systems for managing data pertaining to pest survey, pest identification, emergency actions, phytosanitary certificate issuance and tracking, smuggling interdiction, offshore pest information, and other activities related to its mission. However, APHIS is also trying to interpret pest findings and trends such that a partnership with Federal, State and industry cooperators will provide synergy to interpret the complex relationships among the various data elements. Among those challenges is how to identify risk such that scarce resources may be coordinated and mobilized to mitigate pest pathways. One future refinement of APHIS' endeavors will include county-level data, as well as trade pathways. In addition, APHIS will be convening discussions with potential cooperators so that an appropriate "information technology platform" may be developed and used to share data, jointly interpret data, and enhance communication about timely actions to effectively mitigate risk.

STATUS

Stay tuned to the APHIS Farm Bill website for further details and updates throughout 2010:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/pest_detection/farm_bill.shtml

- APHIS finalized the FY09 spending plan and allocated \$12 million to implement Section 10201.
- Cooperative agreements and procurements were used to provide funds to twenty-one States, Federal cooperators and Mexico to address and mitigate pests per the Implementation Plan for which APHIS sought stakeholder input.
- Throughout the summer, APHIS utilized Webinars, online surveys, and face-to-face meetings to gain input from Federal, State, academic, tribal and Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance industry cooperators on the development of the FY 2010 draft spending plan for \$45 million.
- APHIS aims to make the FY 2010 spending plan available soon after an appropriation bill is passed by Congress. The Bill will give APHIS the authority to pursue full funding for Section 10201.

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