

Farm Bill Section 10007, Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program

Feedback on FY14 Suggestions

Evaluation Process

Suggestions were evaluated by Section 10007 Goal Teams. Teams included representatives from APHIS, the National Plant Board, USDA's Agricultural Research Service, USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA's Forest Service, and the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance.

Goal Teams used the criteria described below to evaluate suggestions. After the Goal Teams completed their evaluations, they met to discuss preliminary funding priorities in an effort to identify synergies across goal areas and to ensure that critical needs or unexplored opportunities to strengthen prevention, detection, and/or mitigation efforts through the FY14 Spending Plan.

The intent of seeking suggestions from stakeholders was to facilitate the development of a comprehensive plan to address early pest detection and rapid response that takes into consideration a diversity of expert opinions on the types of efforts and initiatives that are likely to accomplish the goals of Section 10007. Because this is not a grant program, APHIS has significant flexibility to create a spending plan that addresses the goals of Section 10007.

Evaluation Criteria and Other Considerations

The evaluation team members evaluated the technical factors of the individual suggestions using the evaluation criteria described below.

- *Strategic Alignment* – This criterion was used to assess the extent to which the suggestion aligned with the strategic objectives of Section 10007 of the Farm Bill and the revised strategies and goal-specific categories outlined in FY14 program guidelines.
- *Impact* – This criterion was used to assess the extent to which the suggestion will make an impact and produce results in areas of priority as defined by the individual goal area. This may include, but is not limited to, facilitating trade through the reporting of negative survey data, solving phytosanitary and trade issues in a sustainable manner, mitigating risky behaviors, and/or improving emergency response capacity. Impact might also be measured in terms of ability to succeed on a larger scale than in the past.
- *Feasibility* – This criterion was used to assess the extent to which the suggestion can be accomplished based on key factors such as (but not limited to) availability of resources, best utilization of partner relationships, and existence of a clearly defined process.
- *Past Performance, Best Practices and Innovation* – This criterion was used to assess the extent to which the suggestion will be successful based on past success in similar endeavors or the extent to which the suggestion uses best practices and innovation to offer new and improved approaches to achieving success.

In addition to the evaluation criteria described above, the teams also considered several other factors when developing the spending plan. These other factors addressed sensitive regulatory decision making and appropriated funding issues that are currently impacting several PPQ programs. These factors were also to aid the evaluation teams in determining if the use of Farm Bill funding was appropriate. The factors described below were carefully weighed by each team as they worked together to develop the FY14 Spending Plan.

- *Recently Detected Pests That Will Not Be Regulated at the Federal Level* – Section 10007 of the Farm Bill directs the Secretary of Agriculture to determine if an agricultural pest is a Federal concern. In those situations where a pest is detected, but APHIS will not pursue Federal regulatory action due to any number of circumstances, the decision to use Farm Bill funding was carefully weighed to determine if the suggestion would effectively provide short-term assistance to a state but without an expectation for long-term support from APHIS.
- *PPQ Programs with Budget Increases* – In those situations where a Federal regulatory program had received an increase in its operational budget, evaluators were asked to consider if the work proposed by the suggestion was the same as that which was already funded through Federal appropriations.
- *PPQ Programs with Reduced or Eliminated Budgets* – In situations where appropriated funding for existing PPQ programs was significantly reduced or eliminated, evaluators were asked to consider if the work proposed by the suggestion was the same as the work that was being reduced or eliminated by Congress (such as general survey or large-scale control activities for certain pests).

General Feedback

In FY14, APHIS received 469 suggestions. A total of 383 projects were included in the final Spending. Common characteristics of successful suggestions included:

- Strong alignment with Section 10007 risk criteria, including the number of international ports of entry in a state; the volume of international passenger and cargo entry into the state; 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 climate, crop diversity, or natural resources of the state; and whether the Secretary has determined that an agricultural pest or disease in the state is a federal concern
- Clear focus on pests and/or diseases of significant regulatory concern (specifically Federal quarantine pests)
- Demonstrated benefit to more than one State based either on the nature of the work as scoped or the future potential to scale the work to a regional or national level
- Well-defined and achievable objectives and clear evidence that the technical approach will yield expected results
- Ability to yield significant and tangible results in one year
- The use of a new, innovative, or entrepreneurial approach

- A sufficiently detailed budget that allowed evaluators to determine if the scope of proposed work was commensurate with requested funding and that didn't seek to replace State funding with Federal funding or include expenses that are marginal to the successful implementation of the project
- Implementation durations of 3-years or less with funding requests for start-up costs associated with longer term projects (longer than 3 years) clearly defined
- A description of potential accomplishments in terms of real or tangible products and not just abstract concepts
- Evidence of progress towards achieving stated goals for projects requesting continued funding

Feedback by Goal Area

Goal 1: Survey and Analysis

Analysis – The majority of suggestions that were recommended for funding focused on the continued development of economic modeling and decision support tools. Additionally, development of analytical tools for pathway analysis and visualization, risk analysis and data synthesis, and survey methodology were a high priority. The selected suggestions had clearly defined, attainable objectives and significant potential impact on assisting and improving early detection efforts.

Survey – The survey suggestions that were recommended for funding provided brief, but sufficiently detailed information on the scope of the suggested survey. These suggestions were also consistent with the national guidance that was provided at the outset of the suggestion open period. Suggestions that did not follow this guidance or that did not specify the target pests, the mechanism for reporting data, and the possible return on the investment were not rated highly. Additionally, suggestions where the budget was deemed high or excessive, especially in instances where there was insufficient detail to determine if the proposed scope of work was commensurate with the requested funding were not rated highly.

Goal 2: Domestic Inspection

The majority of suggestions that were recommended for funding utilized canine detection teams to improve plant pest detection in domestic settings. Others focused on interstate regulatory compliance that provided a level of phytosanitary protection to the requesting state as well as additional states. A few focused on developing techniques for using canines in detection of plant pests and other novel detection techniques. Suggestions that focused on detection of significant plant pests or regulatory compliance in high risk states were rated highly.

Goal 3: Pest Identification and Technology

The majority of suggestions recommended for funding clearly indicated how plant pest detection efforts would improve within a one to three year time frame. Suggestions that were concise yet included technical descriptions, explained the benefits of the proposed work, did not include unnecessary steps or procedures, and itemized the budget with sufficient detail to allow reviewers to determine if funding requests were reasonable for salaries, equipment, supplies, travel and other expenses were highly rated.

Goal 4: Safeguarding Nursery Systems

The majority of suggestions that rated highly were very closely aligned with the stated purpose of this goal area and had clearly defined expected outcomes that were both tangible and measurable. Additionally, these suggestions often sought to make effective use of existing resources, can be accomplished in the near-term, and were sustainable in the long-term. Suggestions that were still in an exploratory or developmental stage and were part of a national coalition for managing pests and diseases in specialty crops also rated well. Suggestions that appeared to supplement existing, routine, state-level activities with federal funds and/or that requested funding for large infrastructure outlays (e.g., software development) or did not clearly align with the purpose of this goal area were not recommended for funding.

Goal 5: Education and Outreach

The majority of suggestions that were recommended for funding were aligned with and focused on our priority strategies and target audience categories. Examples of projects that received funding include initiatives to enhance awareness of invasive pests among the public, efforts to increase participation of the public and key stakeholders in the search for forest pests, and initiatives to strengthen plant health emergency response through tribal outreach and education.

Because we believe that the more cooperators we have conducting education and outreach the greater the impact, we strove to fund as many strong suggestions as possible. To accomplish this, we decided to fund some suggestions at a reduced level, thus giving us the ability to offer funding to more projects.

Suggestions for which funding was not recommended were generally not well aligned with Goal 5 strategies and category priorities. In some cases, we did not recommend funding when the suggestion indicated it was mostly for staff positions and not for activities and deliverables. Furthermore, there were a few suggestions that could be accomplished with existing materials and ongoing activities with other cooperators. We plan to contact these suggestors and share our ideas for meeting their goals through collaboration with others.

Goal 6: Enhanced Mitigation

The majority of suggestions that were recommended for funding involved multiple states and cooperators and addressed pests with regional or national impact. Examples include a national approach to host range testing of potential biological control agents of the brown marmorated stink

bug; ; development of boxwood blight mitigation strategies; PCN immunity studies; research and mitigation of the giant African snail; and mitigation efforts of the coconut rhinoceros beetle in the Pacific Islands. Suggestions that were not recommended for funding typically addressed pests of uncertain impact and were not clearly linked to existing APHIS pest mitigation efforts, technical experts or end users.

To Request Feedback Specific to Your Suggestion

You may contact the Farm Bill Section 10007 Goal Review Team by email at farmbillsection10007@aphis.usda.gov. Please include your name, phone number, the title of your suggestion, and the suggestion number. A representative from the Goal Team that reviewed and evaluated your suggestion will contact you.