

Dr. A. Richard Bonanno
Pleasant Valley Gardens, Methuen, MA
President, Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and
Chair, IR-4 Commodity Liaison Committee
rich@mfbf.net

Dear Subcommittee Members,

Subject: Written Testimony to support increase in funding for Minor Crop Pest Management
(IR-4 Project) within USDA-NIFA Research and Education Activities

This testimony is being submitted behalf of the undersigned members of the IR-4 Commodity Liaison Committee. This organization is a coalition of commodity associations, grower groups, food processors and individuals who represent agriculture that feed Americans healthy fruits, vegetables, herb or enhances our environment with ornamental crops and flowers. These two organizations collectively represent specialty crop growers and allied industries with operations in almost every Congressional district of almost every state and whose operations are a huge driver of American agriculture; the farm gate value of specialty crops is over \$65 billion annually. **We are specifically requesting that House Appropriations Committee - Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies increase the funding for the national efforts of the IR-4 Project, within the United States Department of Agriculture-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) in Research and Education Activities under Minor Crop Pest Management (IR-4) from \$11.9 million in FY 2015 to \$15.9 million in FY 2016.**

Farmers of organically and conventionally produced specialty crops must protect these high value commodities from economic damage caused by insects, plant diseases, weeds and other crop pests. Most products that protect crops are regulated by US EPA as conventional pesticides

or biopesticides. The private sector invests significant resources in research to meet US EPA and other regulatory standards which ensure that products are safe for humans and the environment. Because of the research costs, the crop protection industry concentrates their registration efforts on large acreage “major” crops like corn, soybean, and cotton where potential sales support an acceptable return on investment. Small acreage, specialty crops are deemed orphan crops. Due to limited potential sales, it is economically unfeasible for the crop protection industry to commercialize pest control products for specialty crops. Recognizing the dilemma, the IR-4 Project was created in 1963 to help America's specialty crop growers and food processors while promoting public wellbeing. The IR-4 Project has facilitated over 37,000 national registrations of pest management uses that have benefitted agriculture in all states and provided value to the general public.

The IR-4 Project remains relevant today and in desperate need of enhanced funding to sustain services that are critically important to specialty crop agriculture. Specifically, destructive pests continue to attack and damage specialty crops causing reductions in quality and quantity of the final product. Newly emerging pest problems, such as Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, Spotted Wing Drosophila and Downy Mildew have disrupted existing integrated pest management systems. IR-4 has been on the front line to facilitate new registration/solutions to manage pests and help ensure that domestic farmers of fruits, vegetables, herbs, nuts, flowers, nursery and other specialty crops can continue to grow quality and wholesome products demanded by food processors and consumers. Additionally, there is a rapid increase in the number of pests that are becoming resistant to existing conventional pesticide and biopesticide products. IR-4 is

needed to secure new registrations as part of a strategy to maintain efficacy of existing products as well as replacing those products that are unable to manage resistant pests.

Other factors driving the need for enhanced IR-4 funding include:

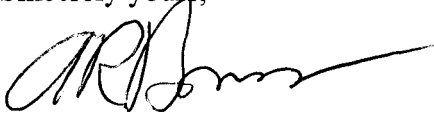
- IR-4 is leading research efforts with the strategic integration of reduced risk pesticides and biopesticides to manage hard to control pests while minimize pest resistance to pesticides and while reducing exposure to pesticides in consumed foods.
- US EPA efforts to enhance protection of the environment, including protection of pollinators, is also triggering the additional studies with additional research costs
- IR-4 is leading regulatory efforts to encourage the registration of new reduced risk pesticides and biopesticides to manage arthropod pests, such as mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, which can vector diseases of humans.
- IR-4 develops data required by our international trading partners to harmonize standards to facilitate US farmer access to lucrative international specialty crop markets. Approximately 20% of IR-4 research is done to expand trade opportunities.
- The cost of IR-4 research continues to escalate from factors such as land rental, employee health care cost, host institution direct/indirect cost recovery, etc.
- IR-4 has had to defer replacement of its vital analytical equipment in laboratories due to funding shortfalls.

The IR-4 Project brings together and effectively coordinates the financial resources and scientific expertise of the federal government, state land grant universities, growers, and chemical/biopesticide companies to accomplish its mission of registering products to manage

destructive pests that threaten food security, consumer prices, and public health. Investment in IR-4 has yielded a huge return on investment. The Michigan State University Center for Economic Analysis (October 2012) determined that the IR-4 Project efforts contribute over **\$7.2 BILLION** to annual US Gross Domestic Product and its efforts support **104,650 JOBS** throughout the United States.

Now, more than ever, US specialty crop growers need IR-4. We urge the House Appropriations Committee - Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies to include \$15.9 million in FY 2016 USDA-NIFA Research and Education Activities for Minor Crop Pest Management (IR-4). This will allow IR-4 to restore research capacity, expand efficacy/crop safety testing, enhance state-based priority setting process and assist host institutions with their indirect cost issues.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Richard Bonanno', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

A. Richard Bonanno, Ph.D.
Chair, IR-4 Commodity Liaison Committee

The following Commodity Associations/Grower Groups support the above written testimony:

AgBusiness Resources

Mint Industry Research Council

Agriculture Development Group, Inc.

National Onion Association

American Farm Bureau Federation

National Potato Council

American Hort.

National Watermelon Promotion Board

American Mushroom Institute

New England Vegetable & Berry Growers

Buurma Farms, Inc.

Northwest Horticulture

Brooks Tropicals LLC

Pleasant Valley Gardens

California Citrus Quality Council

Ratto Brothers

Cherry Marketing Institute

Society of American Florists

Cranberry Institute

Texas Vegetable Association

DelMonte USA

Village Farms L.P.

Engage Agro

Washington Hops Commission

Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association

Western Growers

Ginseng Board of Wisconsin

J G Boswell Company

MBG Marketing