WASHINGTON REPORT
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2008 Farm Bill Finally Becomes Law

After more than two years of hearings and negotiations, the House and Senate have passed the 2008 Farm Bill. Knowing that the Administration would likely veto the bill, the Farm Bill conference committee members had to make some hard compromises to arrive at a version that would guarantee the two-thirds majority vote needed to override a veto. The 2008 Farm Bill contains 15 Titles, many of which have provisions with relevance to the WSSA. I'll try and highlight some of these.

In the **Commodity Programs** Title, it is important to remember that before farmers can receive direct payments, counter-cyclical payments, or average crop revenue election payments, they must agree to **"effectively control noxious weeds"** during the crop year for which the payments are made and in exchange for the payments. In other words, all federally listed noxious weeds must be controlled on any land enrolled in the USDA Commodity Programs. That's an important point to emphasize over and over again, especially from our university Extension personnel.

A new provision in the **Conservation** Title involves the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Now producers are allowed to do **routine grazing or prescribed grazing for the control of invasive species** without penalty or loss of their CRP contract. The producers, in coordination with their State technical committee must develop appropriate vegetation management requirements and stocking rates for the land that are suitable for continued routine grazing and must establish the frequency during which routine grazing may be conducted, taking into consideration regional differences such as climate, soil type, and natural resources.

The purpose of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (**EQIP**) is to provide technical, educational and financial help to eligible farmers and landowners for conservation practices that address soil, water and related natural resource concerns on their farmland in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. Landowners could receive grants under the program of up to $300,000 over any 6 year period. USDA will select projects based on environmental value, with greater significance given to practices that specifically promote: residue management; nutrient management; air quality management; **invasive species management**; pollinator habitat; animal carcass management technology; or **pest management**.

The **Research Title** has some considerable changes in the organization and structure of USDA's Research Education and Economics mission area that are designed to enhance and streamline multi-agency collaboration. You'll need to get your acronym list our and cross a few off (CSREES, NRI, IFAFS) and add some new ones (NIFA, REEO, AFRI). In addition, we should commend Dr. Gale Buchanan and his staff for their guidance and

leadership in shepherding in $500 million in **new mandatory research** funds over the next five years in areas such as specialty crops, organic agriculture, and biofuels.

The first new acronym you should add to your list is **NIFA, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.** All of the authorities under the existing Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (**CSREES**) are transferred to NIFA (i.e. cross CSREES off the list). NIFA will be headed by a Director who is a distinguished scientist and is appointed by the President. The NIFA Director shall report to the Secretary of Agriculture or the designee of the Secretary and will serve a 6-year term, subject to reappointment for an additional 6-year term. NIFA should give USDA's grant-making research agency additional visibility, independence, and scientific credibility similar to that of the NIH or NSF.

NIFA will be responsible for administering the **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)** grants, which combines the money and authorities from the National Research Initiative (**NRI**) and Initiative for Future Agricultural and Food Systems (**IFAFS**) grants. Thus, you can cross off NRI and IFAFS and add AFRI in their place as the main competitive grants program at USDA. Discretionary funding for AFRI is set at $700 million per year from 2008-2012 with 60% designated for basic research and 40% to applied. At least 30% of AFRI funds must go to integrated projects that include teaching and extension components as well.

The USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics, currently Dr. Gale Buchanan, will become USDA's chief scientist and retain jurisdiction over the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). To ensure greater collaboration among these agencies and NIFA, the Under Secretary will have an expanded staff to be housed within a new **Research, Extension and Education Office (REEO)**. The Under Secretary will be charged with preparing an annual "road map" to guide all of the USDA science agencies. The REEO will have six divisions, each led by a qualified division chief reporting to the Under Secretary in the following areas:

* Renewable Energy, Natural Resources and Environment.
* Food Safety, Nutrition and Health.
* Plant Health and Production.
* Animal Health and Production and Animal Products.
* Agriculture Systems and Technology.
* Agriculture Economics and Rural Communities.

As mentioned above, there is $500 million in **new mandatory research** funds over the next five years in areas such as specialty crops, organic agriculture, and biofuels. The funds in these targeted research areas will be administered by NIFA and distributed through peer-reviewed, competitively awarded grants.

Of the $500 million in new mandatory funds over the next 5 years, the new **Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)** will receive $230 million for developing and

disseminating science-based tools to address needs of specific crops and their regions in five legislatively mandated focus areas:

1. Research in plant breeding, genetics, and genomics to improve crop characteristics;
2. Efforts to identify and address threats from pests and diseases, including threats to specialty crop pollinators;
3. New innovations and technology, including improved mechanization and technologies that delay or inhibit ripening;
4. Efforts to improve production efficiency, productivity, and profitability over the long term (including specialty crop policy and marketing); and
5. Methods to prevent, detect, monitor, control, and respond to potential food safety hazards in the production and processing of specialty crops, including fresh produce.

As part of this initiative, approximately **$27 million in grants will be awarded in Fiscal Year 2008** on a competitive basis for research projects that address the five focus areas above. Priority will be given to projects that are multi-state, multi-institutional, or multidisciplinary; and include explicit mechanisms to communicate results to producers and the public.

Eligible applicants include federal agencies, national laboratories, colleges and universities, research institutions and organizations, private organizations or corporations, state agricultural experiment stations, individuals, or groups consisting of two or more of these entities.

It is anticipated that the **SCRI Request for Applications will be released in July 2008** with a 30-day open period. All applicants are required to provide funds or in-kind support from non-federal sources in an amount that is at least equal to the federal funds requested.

The 2008 Farm Bill will provide $78 million in mandatory funds over the next five years for the **Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI),** a five-fold increase from the $15 million allocated in the expiring 2002 legislation. The OREI will facilitate research on the unique challenges of organic production and enhance the ability of organic producers and processors to grow and market organic food, feed, and fiber. The average cost of weed control in organic systems is about $1000 per acre. In 3 national surveys, organic farmers ranked weed control as their number one priority among 30 different research areas.

The **Biomass Research and Development program** is the main biomass energy research program and is administered jointly with the Department of Energy. The 2008 Farm Bill continues this program and provides $118 million in mandatory funding over Fiscal Years 2008-2012, which more than doubles current funding. There is an additional $35 million per year authorized as discretionary funding.

In the Horticulture and Organic Agriculture Title, the 2008 Farm Bill allocates $377 million for a new **Pest and Disease Program focused on combating invasive pests** and

diseases. This program will be a collaborative effort between the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) and state departments of agriculture.

WSSA Members Give Input to USDA-ARS Review of Crop Protection and Quarantine Program

Approximately 20 members of the National and Regional Weed Science Societies traveled to Miami, FL during May 20-23 to participate in the USDA Agricultural Research Service's (ARS) Customer Workshop on Crop Protection and Quarantine (NP 304). While the ARS is an intramural research agency within USDA, they are required to review, identify, and prioritize critical issues from stakeholders and end users to develop and guide future research. The USDA-ARS National Program for Crop Protection and Quarantine (NP 304) is the second largest national program area among the 22 national program areas within ARS with a budget of $102.8 million in FY2007. The mission of the Crop Protection and Quarantine Program in USDA is "to provide technology to manage pest populations below economic damage thresholds by the integration of environmentally compatible strategies that are based on increased understanding of the biology and ecology of insect, mite, and weed pests.

The weed science community had a broad range of expertise present at the customer review workshop and we would like to recognize them below. We are especially grateful for those not employed by USDA who traveled on their own funds.

Michael Barrett, University of Kentucky
Bill Bruckart, USDA-ARS Fort Detrick, MD
Rakesh Chandran, West Virginia University
Caleb Daley, USDA-ARS Houma, LA
Jeff Derr, Virginia Tech
Don Doggett, Lee County Hyacinth Control, FL
Derrill Fick, North Dakota Weed Control Association
Mike Foley, USDA-ARS, Fargo, ND
David Gealy, USDA-ARS, Stuttgart, AR
Jerry Green, Pioneer Hi Bred, Newark, DE
Brad Hanson, USDA-ARS Parlier, CA
Carroll Johnson, USDA-ARS, Tifton, GA
Bruce Maxwell, Montana State University
Bob Nichols, Cotton Incorporated, Cary, NC
Jill Schroeder, New Mexico State University
Dale Shaner, USDA-ARS, Ft. Collins, CO
Lee Van Wychen, WSSA, Washington, DC
Lori Wiles, USDA-ARS, Ft. Collins, CO

Research priorities that were identified in this workshop will be incorporated along with priorities from other customers and stakeholders, and through additional input into a

5-year Action Plan for National Program 305 Crop Protection and Quarantine (NP 304). ARS scientists are currently beginning the process of writing the first drafts of this Plan, which will be sent out for review around September. This Action Plan, once finalized, will be available on the ARS homepage at http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/programs/programs.htm?NP_CODE=304. Any input that is outside the scope of NP 304 will be forwarded to the National Program Leaders of the appropriate National Programs for consideration as part of their respective Action Plans. The NP 304 Action Plan will include concerns or issues that are within the mission and/or activities of the Agricultural Research Service, but not those that are addressed by other federal agencies.

Les Mehrhoff Attends CoFARM/BESC Congressional Visits Day in DC.

On April 8-9, Dr. Les Mehrhoff, Director of the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE), located in the Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology at the University of Connecticut traveled to Washington DC for the Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions (CoFARM) and Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition (BESC) Congressional Visits Day (CVD). Since 2003, CoFARM and BESC have teamed up to organize a CVD in the spring to support funding for USDA and NSF research programs.

During the first day, CVD participants were briefed on aspects of the USDA and NSF research budgets by the following speakers: Whitney Tull, American Society for Microbiology & CoFARM Chair; Robert Sterner, Director of the NSF Division of Environmental Biology; Deborah Sheely, Interim Deputy Administrator, USDA Competitive Programs; and Jean Fruci, Staff Director for House Subcommittee on Energy & Environment. Following the briefings, we held a reception on Capitol Hill honoring the support and contributions of Reps. Brian Bilbray (R-50th CA) and Brian Baird (D-3rd WA). Both Congressmen are members of the House Science Committee and have been very supportive of NSF funding.

From L to R- Rob Hedberg, USDA, Les Mehrhoff, Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE) and Steve Dewey, Utah State University & WSSA-EPA Liaison chat after breakfast in the Secretary's Dining Room at USDA.

On April 9, Les and I began our day with a CoFARM sponsored breakfast in the Secretary's Dining Room at the USDA Whitten Building where Steve Dewey joined us since he was in DC for the week on his WSSA-EPA liaison assignment.
Following breakfast, we headed to Capitol Hill to begin our Congressional Visits. We met with staff members from most of the Connecticut congressional delegation including Senator's Lieberman and Dodd and House Agricultural Appropriations Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro. Overall, the CoFARM/BESC Congressional Visits Day was a big success.

APHIS Issues Federal Import Quarantine Order on Old World Climbing Fern

Effective immediately, USDA-APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine is issuing a Federal Import Quarantine Order restricting the importation of ***Lygodium microphyllum*** (Old World climbing fern) and ***Lygodium flexuosum*** (maidenhair creeper). The restrictions apply to any parts capable of propagation, including spores and leaves (fronds) of these climbing fern species.

Lygodium microphyllum occurs in Florida where it is damaging habitats for federally-listed threatened and endangered species in the Everglades National Park, National Wildlife Refuges, and other conservation areas. Native to Asia and Australia, Old World climbing fern climbs into trees and shades out native vegetation in hundreds of acres in east-central Florida. Dense growth of the plant can also be a fire hazard, frequently enabling small ground fires to reach into tree canopies where it can kill growing branches. *L. microphyllum* is a Florida State noxious weed, subject to control. Areas of the United States at risk from infestation by *L. microphyllum* include the uninfested areas of Florida, and **coastal regions of Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi.**

Lygodium flexuosum is a weed in rice, plantation crops, and natural lowland vegetation areas in eastern Asia, BUT is not known to occur in the United States. This robust species spreads by rhizomes and by climbing over other vegetation. Like L. microphyllum, it has the potential to cause serious environmental and economic damage in the southernmost areas of the United States.

For additional information regarding this Federal Order, you may contact Ms. Polly Lehtonen at (301) 734-4394 or polly.p.lehtonen@aphis.usda.gov

(l to r) Kelly Uhing- Colorado State Weed Coordinator, Slade Franklin- Wyoming State Weed Coordinator, and Jennifer Vollmer- BASF Environmental Resource Specialist, stop for a photo outside the White House in April on their way to a meeting on Capitol Hill. They have done a great deal of work and have been very active in trying to secure appropriations for the Salt Cedar and Russian Olive Control Demonstration Act.

NASS Pesticide Reporting Program Too Expensive for USDA

In May, the USDA announced the planned shutdown of a pesticide reporting program, despite protests from scientists, agricultural chemical companies, commodity organizations, federal and state regulatory agencies, and advocacy groups who wanted the effort retained.

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) maintains that it was simply a matter of budget priorities. NASS officials regret having to cut the program but said that they can no longer dedicate the resources required to run the program, which costs $8 million of the service's $160 million annual budget. Since 1990, scientists have relied on the program's data to monitor pesticide uses and trends in order to conduct research, write grants, and adjust their Extension and outreach activities. The NASS pesticide use survey data was the only publicly available and most statistically reliable source for this data.

First Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) Conference a Success

"People-Powered Projects: The National Cooperative Weed Management Area Conference" was held April 15-17, 2008 in Reno, NV. The conference focused on CWMA funding and logistics, working with volunteers, Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR), awareness and outreach, approaches to mapping, and state and

national initiatives, and concluded with an all-day field trip to restoration sites in the Reno area.

PowerPoint presentations with audio can now be viewed at http://www.weedcenter.org/CWMAconf/CWMA_conf_home.html (click on "Presentations"). In addition to enjoying 27 talks by speakers from across the U.S., attendees from 37 states provided glimpses of cooperative weed management activities in their own states. Their two-minute presentations are compiled into a slideshow at http://www.weedcenter.org/CWMAconf/CWMA_conf_home.html (click on "Slideshow"), which offers a great snapshot of people-powered projects across the nation.

The conference was organized by the Center for Invasive Plant Management and co-hosted by a broad coalition of organizations: Alaska Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management, California Invasive Plant Council, Invasive Plant Atlas of New England, Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council, Midwest Invasive Plant Network, National Park Service, Nevada Department of Agriculture, and the Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council.

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