

Title of project: Greenhouse IPM Advancement

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Abstract: The NY Farm Viability Institute funded a 2 year project designed to evaluate current pest management practices, formulate a plan to improve those practices and measure the economic and environmental impact of adopted changes. In Year 1 (2007) the cooperating growers incorporated a number of procedural changes and attended a variety of educational events. Written plans for Year 2 (2008) are in various states of development and will be completed in early 2008. Plans include improved scouting/record keeping and targeted plans for specific pests emphasize the use of biocontrols and least-toxic materials. Growers will be assisted in carrying out those plans and results will be reviewed and reported at the end of the 2008 growing season.

Justification: Despite extensive extension educational programming and increased interest many growers have been slow to adopt IPM practices. This project is designed to give growers the confidence and training needed for them to establish an ever-improving IPM program.

Objectives: Determine individual grower's current pest management practices, future goals and supply the training, assistance and encouragement needed for them to proceed towards those goals on an independent basis.

Procedures: Meetings were held with growers at their individual operations. The Elements of Greenhouse IPM and the interviews were used to determine the current status of their pest management program, their pest management issues and concerns and their hopes for the future. Some immediate improvements were suggested and their progress was monitored throughout the season via on-site meetings, email and phone. Assistance was given whenever needed and growers were supplied with pest management resources. Meetings were held at the end of the season to review events and begin the planning process.

Results: Grower A has a retail operation, does the pesticide applications and has a designated employee to scout. Both are involved in treatment decisions. Goals include marketing as a "Green" operation so the focus will be on using biologicals, least toxic materials and organics. Improvements in record keeping, scouting techniques and some structural changes were suggested to enhance the likelihood of success with this approach and are being incorporated.

Grower B is also a retail operation and has a designated employee to scout and do applications along with the normal responsibilities of a grower. The owner, the former owner and the grower/scout are involved in treatment decisions. Goals include reducing their reliance on hard pesticides, maintaining or improving plant quality and controlling costs. In 2007 they trialed biologicals in their herbs and vegetables and were pleased with the results. In 2008 they have hired an additional employee to assist the grower in scouting and other duties. They plan on expanding their biological efforts and improve their record keeping.

Grower C is a large wholesale operation and has a designated employee to do applications. Scouting was contracted to a private consultant. Goals included using biologicals and organics in their herb production. A devastating fire in April ended

production in 2007 however they are up and running again and intend to participate fully in 2008. They have hired a designated employee to scout.

All three operations sent employees to educational events to learn more about IPM and biological control.

Implications: All participating growers are poised to reduce the risks associated with pest management and have already made progress in that direction. They will serve as spokespersons for IPM regionally, statewide and, in some instances, nationally. Their operations will serve as IPM flagships to springboard future educational events.