

**American Farmland Trust
Association of Applied IPM Ecologists
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Federation of Certified Farmers' Markets
California Specialty Crops Council
Castle Rock Farms
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
IPM Institute of North America Inc.
Natural Resources Defense Council
Produce Marketing Association
Rominger Bros. Farms
Roots of Change
San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District
Western Growers**

December 3, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Preserve Regional Integrated Pest Management Centers

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We are writing to urge your support for preserving the Regional Integrated Pest Management Centers that were effectively eliminated in the President's FY 2011 budget. We hope you will provide leadership to ensure that they are restored in the budget now being developed for FY 2012.

We recognize that the FY 2011 budget for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) shifted funding from several Section 406 Integrated Programs, including the Regional IPM Centers, to the new consolidated competitive grants program housed under the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. It is our understanding that this was to improve the effectiveness of these programs, a laudable goal. However, there is currently no provision in the budget to preserve the staff, programs, networks, websites and other assets of the Regional IPM Programs, effectively eliminating them.

The Regional IPM Centers enjoy strong support from both growers and environmental groups. They collectively form a critical network of programs, scientific advisors, research staff, publications, tools and grant opportunities to help growers solve pressing pest problems while minimizing environmental impacts. The Centers were established in 2000 by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) and play an important role in helping USDA promote Integrated Pest

Management. The Centers act as hubs to enable growers, land managers and scientists to collaborate and share learning. The expert advisors, networks and resources they provide are critical and cannot be replaced by a competitive grants program.

In 2006, USDA and CSREES jointly commissioned an independent review of the Centers' performance and concluded that they have been very effective in fostering IPM around the nation.¹ The review states: "The IPM Centers have been successful individually and as a network. The engagement of a wide spectrum of nontraditional partners and reinforcement of established IPM networks by the Centers have facilitated IPM adoption across the nation. The IPM Centers have proven to have the capacity and flexibility to coordinate a positive response among land grant university, public agency and private partners to emerging pest management issues on a regional and national scale."

We hope you will intervene in the budget process to ensure that these critical programs are preserved.

Respectfully,

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¹ <http://www.ipmcenters.org/IPMCenterReview2-06.pdf>

Michael R. Dimock, President,
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Molly Watkins, Vice President
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Hank Giclas, Senior VP Science and Technology
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Cc. Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan