



NATIONAL EDUCATION
CONFERENCE February 3-5, 2026

IR-4 Update

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Why Do We Exist?

Benefits of Pest Management



Minor Use Pesticide Problem



Modern Minor Use Problem

Registrations are plentiful but ability to use approved pest management products can be limited:

- Export issues
- Efficacy data needs
- Pest resistance
- Use restrictions
- Public acceptance



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IR-4's Mission

**Securing pest management solutions for specialty crops
and specialty uses in support of public well-being.**



Founding Member:
MIRC
Mint Industry
Research Council



U.S. APPLE
ASSOCIATION



USA Dry Pea
& Lentil Council



THE
CRANBERRY
INSTITUTE





What We Do

- **Ensure that specialty crops and minor uses have legal access to safe, effective crop protection tools**
- **Work with growers and other stakeholders to identify pest management needs and solutions**
- **Conduct necessary crop safety, efficacy, and residue research**
- **Submit data to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other entities for approval of new uses**

Crops IR-4 Supports

- **Specialty crops**
 - Fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs, spices, mushrooms, ornamental crops + more
 - USDA, Section 101 of the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004
 - High-value, lower-acreage crops
- **Minor uses on major crops**
 - Ex: methoxyfenozide on rice





Why Our Work Matters

- **Specialty crops are vital to public health, the environment & the economy**
- **Pest pressure on specialty crops is significant and becoming more critical with climate shift**
- **Resistance to existing pest products is increasing**
- **Limited tools are accessible for managing pests on specialty crops**
- **Opportunities for reduced-risk products and emerging technologies**
- **International harmonization helps growers access export markets**



Program Areas



Food Crops

- Residue Studies & Product Performance
- Biopesticide Regulatory Support
- International Activities

Environmental Horticulture

- Product Performance



Critical Partnership with EPA

EPA is closely involved with various IR-4 activities

- **Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings**
- **Stoplight analysis in advance of our Food Use Workshop**

IR-4 facilitates interaction between the agency and stakeholders

- **Annual IR-4/EPA Crop Tour**

Elimination of the Minor Use Branch

- Loss of dedicated resources as personnel are moved into other teams
- No longer a stand-alone branch
- IR-4 activities now coordinated through existing Project Management teams at EPA
- Individual discipline contacts to help facilitate submissions (herbicides, fungicides, insecticides)
- Expectation that this will eventually lead to a more efficient streamlined system
- EPA is committed to maintaining its services to specialty crop stakeholders



New Uses - How did we do in 2025?

- **New Uses**
 - ***Only three tolerance actions associated with IR-4 work supporting new 3 registrations with 3 active ingredients in 2025. Compare to 52 tolerances/1024 potential registrations in 2024.***
 - *Delays associated with change in administration*
 - *Increased hurdles at EPA related to posting items in the Federal Register*
 - *Substantial reductions in staff at EPA to process new uses*



Submissions – How did we do in 2025?

- **Submissions to EPA**
 - ***Nine IR-4 tolerance petitions submitted to EPA in 2025.***
 - *Lack of pollinator data now a significant hurdle to submissions*
 - *Using company meetings to prompt registrants to investigate data gaps*
 - *Many registrants waiting for DCI to generate data = delays to submission*
 - *Backlog of studies to be completed from both laboratory and HQ*
 - *Ongoing efforts to address laboratory backlog – redistribution of resources within IR-4. No longer an IS program.*
 - *Backlog of studies to be written being addressed through rebalancing of workloads among study directors, cross-training biologists to assist with report writing*

Challenges

- ***Internal performance issues***
 - ***Backlog in writing studies***
 - ***Analytical backlog and quality – delays submissions***
 - ***Delays in the field***
 - ***More critical as analytical backlog is addressed***
 - ***One book holds up the whole study.***
 - ***Replace failed trials in that year if possible.***
 - ***Concern that if we miss a submission, it could be years before it can go in.***

Critical Items for our Success:

- **New Executive Director**
- **We will have a new Executive Director**
- **There will be changes**
- **Collaborate and support new leadership**

Critical Items for our Success:

- **Data Quality is Vital**
 - **Data must be defensible.**
 - **Empowered – look at data and entries critically.**
 - **Well trained in GLP regs /SOP's other guidelines.**
 - **Provide organized data packages to QA.**
 - **Learn from feedback – QA audits.**
 - **Constant recognition of our customers.**
 - **Accountable for your job performance.**

Critical Items for our Success:

- **We Are A Team**
 - **Recognize that we are on the same team**
 - **Everyone is important and contributes to our success**
 - **We must move data through our system efficiently.**
 - **We may have different perspectives but we listen and support each other.**
 - **We remember who we serve – our grower community**



Questions?



**TOO GOOD
TO WASTE**

Thank you!

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