

Overview of Potato Pest Management Funding in Wisconsin *setting the bar for sustainable agriculture*

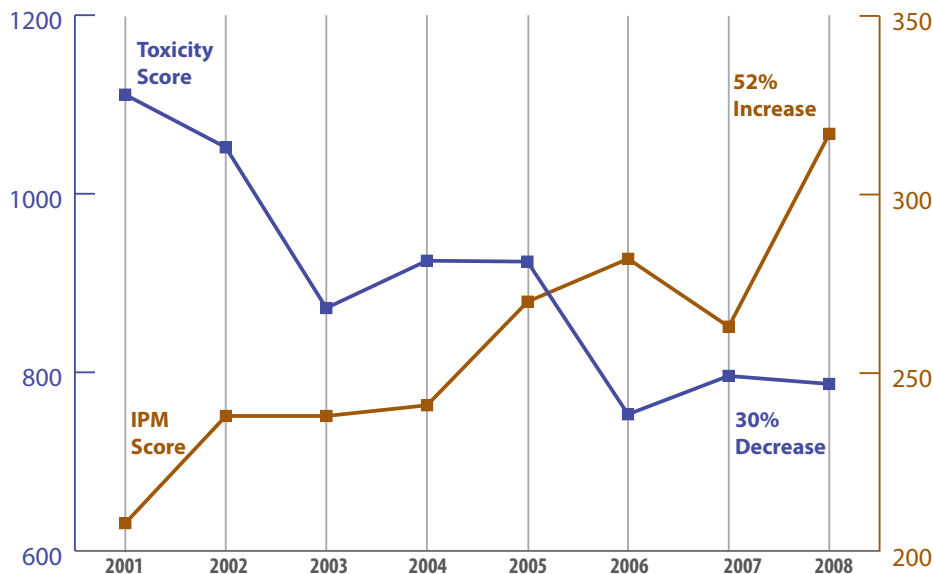
This funding supports a collaborative effort of the University of Wisconsin, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) to advance growers' use of bio-intensive integrated pest management (IPM), reduce reliance on high-risk pesticides, and to enhance ecosystem conservation efforts by the development of an ecological potato standard. This supports an ongoing effort to encourage marketplace incentives for ecologically grown potatoes and rotational crops.

Results:

- Potato and vegetable growers have refined their pest management practices to use more biologically-based practices and less toxic pesticides.
- Potato growers have taken positive conservation actions to protect or restore rare plants and animals on privately owned lands.
- Wisconsin fresh market potato and vegetable growers have moved to more sustainable growing practices and received marketplace incentives from their consumers.
- The project has documented the results of positive change using a scientific, research-based production standard.

*For ten years, the **Potato Pest Management project** has been a national model for the successful adoption of sustainable agricultural practices.*

Its partners include the University of Wisconsin, many agricultural organizations (WPVGA, participating growers, Protected Harvest) as well as many national and local environmental organizations (World Wildlife Fund, Defenders of Wildlife, International Crane Foundation).



To date, our growers have reduced pesticide toxicity by 30%, while increasing their bio-intensive IPM practices by 52%



A major goal of this collaboration is to develop marketplace incentives that reward farming practices that reduce the impact of agricultural pesticides on health and the environment. With the growing consumer demand for products that are produced with sustainable methods, this project benefits Wisconsin by putting its growers in a leading position to capture this expanding market. It offers value-added options to the agricultural industry facing over production, low prices, and Food Quality Protection Act regulatory demands.



Activities:

- **Educational outreach** – The Collaboration has developed a proven, cutting edge educational model to deliver biointensive IPM education and technical assistance to Wisconsin growers.
- **Ecosystem conservation** – Potato growers complete conservation practices to restore natural areas that protect and conserve the diversity of rare plant or animal species. *To date, over 400 acres of privately owned lands have been restored as a result of this program.*
- **Niche (value added) marketing** – The Collaboration has a high-bar, credible, researched based standard that is providing value added opportunities to Wisconsin fresh market growers, which in turn, is providing options for “sustainable” and “green” grown environmentally sound produce in the marketplace.

Future Goals:

We are working on using the proven existing model to expand our certification programs beyond the potato field to include a whole farm certification component which will encompass multiple vegetable and rotational crops. This will be accomplished by utilizing the proven measurement and documentation tools to develop a high-bar, research and science based standard for additional crops. It is a critical time to develop such a program, as growers need to capitalize on market opportunities that are arising as a result of the “sustainable” and “green” initiatives in the food industry.



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