

Apple Pest Management Transition Project Progress Report April 2009

The Pest Management Transition Project (PMTP) continues to focus on three objectives:

1. To enhance understanding of new IPM technologies through educational programs and communication of research-based knowledge.
2. To increase adoption of new IPM technologies through sharing information on successes and failures and communicating with all stakeholders on project progress.
3. To document changes in practices, attitudes, and perceptions of growers, farm workers, and stakeholders.

Winter ‘grower’ meetings, sponsored by WSU extension, warehouses/packinghouses, and agricultural chemical distribution companies, are a standard means for disseminating information to the Washington State apple industry and, during the winter of 2008-09, PMTP participated in 18 industry meetings to present research-based knowledge relating to new IPM technologies and their implementation and to invite growers and decision makers to participate in PMTP through an Implementation Unit (IU). In addition, a new assessment tool, TurningPoint, was used to gather information and stimulate discussion at several winter meetings. The TurningPoint technology allows an audience to interact with, and provide anonymous feedback to, a presenter through the use of “clickers.” PMTP presentations using Turning Point were made at seven Spanish-language and one English-language seminar – including three large tree fruit industry meetings, and five separate pesticide applicator recertification classes. The use of the TurningPoint system expanded these presentations from outreach and education to incorporate data collection as well. Sessions measured pesticide applicators’ knowledge of the Guthion phase-out and alternative methods of pest management. Just under 1000 participants were surveyed (note, however, that there was some overlap between session participants so unique participants probably numbered more realistically around 800).

Results showed that 70% of participants had worked with Guthion and almost 80% knew of the Guthion phase-out. In addition 20-50% had worked with new reduced-risk insecticides and almost 75% had worked with certain IPM practices (primarily mating disruption). Over 90% of respondents indicated they knew how to verify the personal protective equipment needed to spray a particular pesticide and 86% reported knowing the re-entry interval for the pesticides they were using. Thus, respondents know a good deal about the Guthion phase-out, alternative pest management, and pesticide safety, and they also reported generally knowing how to get the information they needed to work with pesticides. Nevertheless, there was room for additional knowledge and improvement, and PMTP is working with stakeholders to address some of these additional information needs.

Outreach to stakeholder groups included continued meetings with environmental groups/coalitions to discuss tools for improving agricultural sustainability, participation in farm worker pesticide education programs, and presentations at several conferences, including one for rural health care providers and one for migrant health clinic outreach workers. Aside from sharing information about the PMTP, these presentations also included opportunities for participants to comment on drafts of new informational materials (posters, etc.) being developed to increase stakeholder knowledge and awareness of pesticide safety issues. Such outreach will

continue at a Latino Health Fair in Omak and a National Farm Worker Conference in Texas in May, among other venues.

Recent assessment and documentation efforts include two baseline surveys. The first survey was directed at fruit industry consultants while the second targeted growers/managers. The consultant survey, conducted via mail in June 2008, had a 57% response rate (40 questionnaires returned of 73 mailed; 3 non-consultants returned). Results showed that consultants viewed codling moth (the primary target for Guthion) as the key pest of concern, and that most still included Guthion as part of their pest management recommendations; however, all were aware of the EPA mandated phase-out of this product. Most consultants also expressed confidence in recommending both integrated pest management tactics and new insecticides as alternatives for Guthion, and seventy-five percent (75%) indicated an interest in more training on how to use or recommend alternatives for Guthion to manage pests. While consultants were concerned that both the costs and control of codling moth would become more difficult after the Guthion phase-out, they agreed that researchers have developed good information on alternatives to Guthion, and that the PMTP is meeting a concrete need by providing training and resources to help the apple industry adopt alternative technologies.

The second baseline survey was designed to assess apple *growers'* uses and perceptions of insecticides and IPM practices for the 2008 growing season was sent to growers in February 2009. Results are currently being compiled and tabulated, and will be compared to the consultant survey results and reported on in the next AgPilots report. If resources are available a second consultant survey will also be sent out in fall 2009 to track changes in fruit industry pest management practices and perceptions over time, using the first consultant survey as a baseline measurement.

IU participants were also asked to complete a brief survey at the end of the 2008 season, via TurningPoint or online, to assess their perceptions of the IU meetings and the PMTP educational efforts. Overall, 102 (53%) of the IU participants responded to the survey and most indicated a high level of satisfaction with the IU meetings and the educational materials and programs provided by PMTP. More than 80% of the IU participants indicated that PMTP had influenced their pest management decisions and 90% indicated that they would like to participate in an IU again in 2009. Most (80%) indicated that they would like to attend a PMTP field day in 2009 and 97% indicated that they would like to continue to receive the PMTP newsletter.

Many of the IUs from 2008 have continued into 2009, while others have been refocused or relocated. Eleven IUs, consisting of 135 participants representing over 90,000 Washington apple acres, began meeting in March of 2009. The IUs will meet monthly through March, April, and May to discuss planning pest management programs and again pre- and post-harvest to discuss successes and failures encountered as new pest management technologies are implemented. PMTP has worked with WSDA to provide pesticide license recertification credits to those who attend IU meetings in 2009. The PMTP newsletter began again in April and will continue through the 2009 growing season. PMTP field days for 2009 are currently being planned for the end of May/First of June. The PMTP website (<http://pmtip.wsu.edu>) is the best source for information about PMTP and transitioning pest management programs.