

# Extension Conducts Comprehensive Producer Survey

URBANA, ILL.

University of Illinois Extension is in the midst of a comprehensive statewide private applicator surveying effort. More than 2,000 Illinois producers will be surveyed during the next few weeks in a project funded by the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the U.S. EPA.

The survey's goal is to secure producer input related to recent changes in private applicator training and to also determine those factors that influence decisions related to pest management. A high response rate is critical to this surveying effort, said Matt Montgomery, U of I Extension local foods and small farms educator.

Private applicators in Illinois, individuals who are certified to apply restricted-use pesticides on their own property or property controlled by them in the production of an agricultural commodity, must renew their certification every three years. The Illinois Department of Agriculture administers the licensing program for applicators and also administers the certification exam. U of I provides pre-test training in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Agriculture. That pre-test training is part of the university's Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP).

"The goal of PSEP is to reach all users of pesticides in the state of Illinois with educational information on the effective, economic and environmentally sound use of pesticides," Montgomery said.

Staffing and funding constraints recently required that private applicator training events be moved from unit locations (county-level loca-

tions) to regional locations. By evaluating producer perception of those changes and by determining the training needs and/or constraints placed upon producers, U of I hopes to better develop and design future pesticide safety education programming.

"Integrated Pest Management (IPM) has been one very important pillar within PSEP, and the need to practice IPM is emphasized in that program and at other non-PSEP university events," Montgomery said. "However, most IPM proponents agree that the current approach to education could be more effective. Determining how IPM education can be made more effective is another goal of this surveying effort."

The recently distributed survey will attempt to estimate the current rate of IPM use in Illinois, evaluate the use of IPM components and determine individual factors that may influence IPM adoption. By evaluating the current status of IPM use and by evaluating those factors that influence IPM use, U of I hopes to improve IPM education in the state.

"We strongly encourage producers to take a few moments to provide feedback in this very important programming area," he said. "Taking a few moments to fill out this survey is invaluable to those of us involved in agricultural education within the state."

All producer responses will remain confidential, and surveying should be completed by the first full week of April. The survey instrument was designed by U of I Extension, the Illinois State Water Survey, and the U of I at Springfield. Δ



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