

**Water Quality Enhancement Activity – WQL30 – Integrated pest management for ORGANIC farming**



**Enhancement Description**  
 Managing pests on an organic farm, including farms transitioning to organic, with an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system that relies on high level prevention, avoidance, monitoring, and suppression techniques that are based on an understanding of pest ecology. Organic IPM relies primarily on ecologically-based cultural and biological practices that result in healthy soil, healthy plants and habitat for beneficial organisms. Appropriate mitigation techniques are utilized to reduce environmental risks from selected suppression techniques.

**Land Use Applicability**  
 Cropland, Pastureland, Rangeland

**Benefits**  
 Environmental benefits will be operation specific. Benefits may include but are not limited to improved water and air quality achieved through minimizing suppression risk to natural resources. This will include reducing pesticide applications, and pesticide risks in runoff, leaching, drift and volatilization, as well as impacts on pollinators, beneficial insects, wildlife and humans. It may also include reduced soil erosion and sediment loss from tillage for weed control. Implementing IPM increases biodiversity on the farm while improving soil quality, resulting in a more stable and resilient farming system that helps to prevent pests from overwhelming the system.

**Conditions Where Enhancement Applies**  
 This enhancement applies to all crop, pasture, or range land uses in an organic system where pesticide environmental risks are present that need mitigation options to meet or exceed the criteria detailed below.

**Criteria**  
 IPM is a sustainable approach to pest management that combines the use of prevention, avoidance, monitoring and suppression strategies with plant health, to maintain pest populations below economically damaging levels, to minimize pest resistance to pest control materials and techniques, and to minimize harmful effects of pest control on human health and environmental resources. If available, Land Grant University guidance should be followed for acceptable prevention, avoidance, monitoring and suppression techniques. Components of a high level Organic IPM include proactive planning, cultural and biological controls.



High level IPM requires:

1. A written IPM plan and implementation of activities that include:
  - a. Prevention techniques such as cleaning equipment and gear when leaving an infested area, using pest-free seeds and transplants, irrigation scheduling to avoid situations conducive to disease development, etc.
  - b. Avoidance techniques such as maintaining soil health and diverse plant communities, managing nutrients to reduce crop susceptibility, using pest resistant varieties, crop rotation, refuge management, strip cropping, plant spacing, intercropping, etc.
  - c. Monitoring techniques such as pest scouting, degree-day modeling, weather forecasting, soil and tissue sampling, use of economic thresholds, etc. to help target suppression strategies and avoid routine treatments. Pest scouting protocols should include key natural enemies of each target pest species, as well as the pests themselves.
  - d. Suppression techniques such as cultural and biological control methods, to reduce or manage a pest population or its impacts while minimizing risks to non-target organisms.
2. Only those substances listed in the National Organic Program (NOP) regulations §205.601 and §205.603 may be used in the IPM program. All NOP restrictions, annotations and provisions related to the use of pest control substances shall be followed.
3. Acreage must be certified organic or in the transition to organic process.
4. A minimum mitigation index score of  $\geq 35$  for the identified environmental risk but not less than specified by NRCS Agronomy Technical Note #5.
5. Mitigation index scores are quantified using NRCS Agronomy Technical Note #5, [Pest Management in the Conservation Planning Process](#).

**Adoption Requirements**

This enhancement is considered adopted when a management system has been implemented on the land use acreage that meets or exceed the minimum mitigation index criteria.

**Documentation Requirements**

1. A written organic IPM system plan for all of the offered acres. This plan should include each of the following items:
  - a. Pest prevention techniques,
  - b. Pest avoidance techniques,
  - c. Pest monitoring (scouting) techniques,
  - d. Economic pest thresholds,
  - e. Pest suppression techniques, including cultural, biological, and physical methods, as well as NOP-allowed pest suppression materials to be used only in the event that other methods prove insufficient.
  - f. Demonstration that pest suppression materials were used only when all other techniques have been proven insufficient.
  - g. Pesticide environmental risk analysis tool that was used for pesticides selected from the NOP Prohibited and Allowed Substance list (e.g., the NRCS Windows Pesticide Screening Tool - WIN-PST),



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- h. Pesticide application records with the specific management techniques that were utilized to reduce pesticide environmental risk (e.g., spot treatment, banding, pheromone traps, pesticide incorporation, etc.),
    - i. Map showing location of fields, acreage, beneficial insect habitat, etc., and
    - j. Any measures implemented to ameliorate the impact of non-chemical suppression methods and activities performed to enhance soil and plant health.
  2. Copies of scouting reports and other IPM records used to monitor and evaluate the plans effectiveness
  3. If formal IPM Guidelines with a numeric scoring system have been developed and approved by Extension, a completed set of those guidelines can be substituted for the documentation requirements in number 1 above.

### **References**

Ignazi, J.C. 1991. Prevention of Water Pollution by Agriculture and Related Activities. Proceedings of the FAO Expert Consultation – Water Report 1, pp 247-261.

Mohler, C.L. and S.E. Johnson, editors. 2009. Crop Rotation on Organic Farms: A Planning Manual. Natural Resource, Agriculture, and Engineering Service. Cooperative Extension. IV. Series: NRAES (Series); 177.

USDA-AMS. 2011. Organic Production and Handling Standards. National Organic Program  
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMsv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3004445>.

USDA-NRCS. 2010. Conservation Practice Standard: Integrated Pest Management-Code 595

USDA-NRCS. 2011. Agronomy Technical Note No. 5 – Pest Management in the Conservation Planning Process.