

USING A SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL TO PROMOTE AND EDUCATE INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT TO FARMERS. Richard T. Proost, Bryan M. Jensen, Daniel J. Heider and Chris M. Boerboom, Senior Outreach Specialist, Program Manager, Program Manager, and Professor, Nutrient and Pest Management Program, Integrated Pest Management Program, Integrated Pest Management Program and the Department of Agronomy, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706

The National Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Initiative was announced in 1994 with the intent to “achieve the national goal of IPM implementation on 75% of crop acres by the year 2000.” For the most part, this goal has been met on high value crops such as apples, grapes, and potatoes. However this goal has not been met on commodity crops such as corn and soybean. A variety of reasons for the lack of IPM adoption exist, including physical constraints of the farm, government programs, knowledge base, time and labor requirements, and the perception of increased risk. Furthermore, many farmers are confused or unsure of which practices even constitute IPM.

Creating awareness and interest in IPM practices and relating them directly to the farm can help to promote and increase adoption. The “Pest Management Assessment for Field Corn”, a farmer self-assessment, was developed to help farmers take credit for IPM practices that they currently use and to provide an awareness of other IPM practices they may wish to consider. The assessment consists of questions in four categories: general, weed, insect, and disease management. The assessment is administered either as part of crop production meeting or via an Internet website (<http://ipcm.wisc.edu/surveys/corn/>). Farmers are assured complete confidentiality, as the assessment is not collected, or in the case of the Internet, not linked to them. The total point values for each category are collected to calculate averages and ranges, which are then reported back at the end of the meeting or posted on the website.

To date, 100 farmers and 28 Farm Short Course students have taken the assessment at meetings or in the classroom. The Internet site was recently launched (November, 2002) and has yet to be fully utilized. Assessment results indicate that corn farmers in Wisconsin have the potential for significant improvement before reaching a high level of IPM adoption. On average, farmers received 67, 51, 47 and 55% of the possible points in the general (57 points), weed (115 points), insect (83 points) and disease (40 points) categories, respectively. Furthermore, the range of scores indicated a wide degree of IPM adoption. Point ranges were 15 to 57, 26 to 99, 7 to 80 and 2 to 38 for general, weed, insect and disease management sections, respectively. Further refinements to the assessment include the addition of soybean and alfalfa to both the printed copy and the Internet version. The ultimate goal is to develop a farm wide assessment that will relate IPM practices directly to the farmer in a confidential manner.