



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Cooperative State  
Research, Education,  
and Extension Service

## Plant and Animal Systems

USDA Special Grant

# Interregional Research Project (IR-4) Assists Growers of Minor Crops

Like other companies, companies that invent and manufacture crop protection chemicals strive for the maximum return for the shareholder's investment. These organizations race to develop profitable compounds that can be used on as many acres as possible. This means that chemical companies normally place a much higher priority on corn, soybeans, and wheat than crops with smaller acreages such as artichokes, onions, and blueberries. Farmers who grow these specialty "minor" crops are sometimes left

without the management tools they need to control pests.

In 1963, directors of state agricultural experiment stations recognized that this situation created a lack of available pest control products for minor food crops. Working with the USDA, they organized the Interregional Research Project No. 4, commonly known as IR-4. This program helps to make chemical and biological pesticides available to minor crop growers.

It is very expensive to conduct research necessary to demonstrate that a product works and to obtain

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration for conventional pesticides. The IR-4 program provides the resources to conduct the research necessary to bring new pest management alternatives to minor crops. The program focuses on food crops as well as ornamental crops.

For 2001, IR-4 submitted data

**BLACKBERRY AND BLUEBERRY GROWERS DEPEND ON TOOLS MADE AVAILABLE BY THE IR-4 PROGRAM.**



USDA-ARS

**IR-4 is a government and land-grant university sponsored program to develop the data necessary for submitting minor crop pest control options to the EPA for approval.**

that supported 543 new minor food use clearances. The Food Use component of the IR-4 Program continues to have a high productivity that, according to EPA, supports more than 40 percent of all EPA pesticide registrations. Since the program's inception in 1963, IR-4 has been granted more than 6,000 food use clearances.

For ornamental crops in 2001, IR-4 obtained 296 ornamental clearances for crop protection chemicals. Since 1977, IR-4 has assisted with the registration of more than 9,100 crop protection chemicals and biological pest control agents on nursery stock, flowers, and turf grass. The ornamental industry accounts for more than 25 percent, or \$12 billion, of the total minor crop value in the United States.

Biopesticides have been an important IR-4 thrust since 1982. EPA granted 21 IR-4 supported biopesticide food use clearances in 2001 (more than 220 since the program began).

IR-4 is a government and land-grant university sponsored program to develop the data necessary for submitting minor crop pest control options to the EPA for approval. Through the years IR-4's mission has expanded to include ornamentals and biopesticides (including microbials like bacteria and viruses, and biochemicals like pheromones and growth regulators), but the goal has remained the same: IR-4 works with farmers, agricultural scientists, commodity organizations, and extension personnel to provide pest management solutions to growers of minor crops.

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