

May 1, 2008

The Honorable Herb Kohl
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Bennett
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Agriculture Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kohl, Senator Bennett, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Mr. Kingston:

We are writing in support of a program that has the potential to revolutionize pest risk management across the nation. The Integrated Pest Management Pest Information Platform for Extension and Education (PIPE) is a monitoring and early-warning system developed in 2004 to alert farmers to the presence and spread of soybean rust. It has since been expanded to include other crops and pests. The President's Budget for FY 2009 requests \$2.27 million in the Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative to maintain the core infrastructure of PIPE.

PIPE is a coordinated framework that has been highly effective in helping growers make informed decisions about fungicide application. The system includes a surveillance and monitoring network, a Web-based information management system, criteria for deciding when to apply fungicides, predictive modeling, and outreach. The development of the web-based tracking and early-warning system has greatly enhanced the ability of farmers to manage risk and avoid unnecessary fungicide applications. USDA's Economic Research Service has found that rust management due to PIPE saved farmers as much as \$353 million in 2005 alone.

The PIPE system has now been extended to control pests for additional crops: legume and pulse crops, melons, cucumbers, squash, and pecans. By maintaining the core PIPE infrastructure and adding new crops, the potential for PIPE to help growers manage pests and diseases is unlimited.

The PIPE system was funded primarily by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) in crop years 2006-2008. This funding is available only for development projects and can no longer be used to maintain the PIPE system.

We strongly support the continuation of PIPE. We urge Congress to recognize its value to farmers throughout the country by including PIPE in the FY 2009 Agricultural Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

American Soybean Association