



May 6, 2024

Chavonda Jacobs-Young  
Undersecretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE)  
Jamie Whitten Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0110

**Reference: Restoration of Funding for USDA-ARS Minor Crop Umbrella Fund**

Dear Undersecretary Jacobs-Young,

We, the Friends of IR-4 and the Commodity Liaison Committee (CLC) of the IR-4 request you restore \$330,000 to the USDA-ARS Minor Crop Umbrella Fund.

The Friends of IR-4 and the CLC include members of the specialty crop industry, registrants and producers of specialty crops from across the U.S. The membership represents the stakeholders of the ARS growing crops as diverse as strawberries, hops, ginseng, pulses and horticulture plants. The CLC and the Friends have worked together to represent the stakeholder needs across the entire U.S.

For over 60 years, specialty crop producers have relied on the collaborations between the USDA-ARS and the IR-4 to supply them with residue data and lab analyses needed to provide for access to critical crop protection tools. The loss of funding by ARS directly impacts the following items.

- The funding loss makes it difficult to meet the Federal Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) Requirements (Chapter 40-Code of Federal Regulations, Part 160) which are essential for submissions to EPA. This will impact IR-4s 2024 research plan by excluding the work done at ARS field sites as part of the research program.
- The cuts eliminate the newly dedicated ornamental horticulture research center funded by cooperative resources provided by ARS, IR-4 and University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Collaboration between agencies like IR-4, land grant universities, and USDA-ARS is held as an example by both stakeholders and USDA team members alike.
- Existing ARS laboratories at Tifton, GA and Wapato, WA will have difficulty performing scheduled analysis as they rely in part on funds from the Umbrella Fund to provide necessary supplies, materials and service contracts. The IR-4 relies on the results from these labs to complete the annual research plan.

ARS researchers at these research farms and analytical laboratories contribute approximately 15% of the total efforts required to achieve the registrations needed by growers to manage pests on high value specialty crops. According to this estimate from the ARS website, “ARS resources yielded 17 new tolerances, 96 registrations on food crops and impacted 226 decisions on non-food ornamental crop. In addition, Michigan State University’s Center for Economic Analysis recently published that IR-4 Project efforts adds \$8.7 billion dollars to the annual gross domestic product. Based on these values, 2023 ARS contributions to the IR-4 Project equals \$1.3 billion dollars each year.” The reduction in funding will significantly reduce the productivity of the ARS team members and their contribution to the overall IR-4 program and thus to producers of specialty crops.

The mission of USDA-ARS is to provide scientific solutions to national and global agricultural challenges. One of the most important challenges is to produce healthy food for the planet’s growing population. Specialty crops are one of the most important sources of nutrition and an important answer to this challenge. With the population of the world expanding to 10 billion people by 2050, it does not make sense to reduce the funding for these important crops providing healthy food and a healthy environment for our population.

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At a recent planning session for the NP304 program for the ARS held at Beltsville, MD, the stakeholder session stressed the importance of IR-4 to find solutions to pest problems like Citrus Greening, work to find integrated solutions for biopesticides, and new pest management tools with emerging crops like hemp. Loss of funding from our key partner will significantly hamstring the support for pest control and pest management solutions.

We need your help to restore the funding for the Minor Crop Umbrella Fund and continue to support the important mission of the IR-4 and the partnership with USDA-ARS and the IR-4 program.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Todd Scholz  
Chair, Commodity Liaison Committee  
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council

Keith Pitts  
Vice Chair, Commodity Liaison Committee  
SVP-Sustainability and Regulatory Strategy  
Pro Farm Group, Bioceres Crop Solutions

Adama  
American Mushroom Institute  
AmericanHort  
American Sugar Cane League  
Aquatic Plant Management Society  
Bioworks  
Brooks Tropicals  
California Tomato Research Institute  
Cherry Marketing Institute  
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association  
Gowan Company  
Hops Growers of America  
International Fresh Produce Association  
Lallemand Specialties Inc.  
Michigan Nursery & Landscape Association  
Mint Industry Research Council  
Minor Use Foundation  
National Watermelon Association  
North American Blueberry Council  
North Central Weed Science Society  
Northeastern Weed Science Society  
Oregon Seed Council  
Pro Farm Group  
Southern Weed Science Society  
Village Farms, L.P.  
Washington Asparagus Commission  
Washington Blueberry Commission  
Weed Science Society of America

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Western Society of Weed Science

cc: Dr. Nora Lapitan, Acting Associate Administrator, National Programs  
Joon Park, Associate Administrator, Research Operations and Management  
Michael Arnold, Director of Budget, USDA-ARS  
Dr. Joseph Munyaneza, National Program Leader for Specialty Crops  
Dr. Tara McHugh, Area Director, Pacific West Area  
Dr. Larry Chandler, Area Director, Plains Area  
Dr. Rosalind James, Area Director, Midwest Area  
Dr. Thomas Shanower, Area Director, Northeast Area  
Archie Tucker, Area Director, Southeast Area  
Dr. Alvin Simmons, Research Entomologist, (Member of IR-4 PMC)