North Central IPM Center Drift Special Project Group  
2020-2021 Plan of Work  
Specialty Crop Grower Survey

**Brief Problem & Justification**

While there is much anecdotal evidence that dicamba and 2,4-D drift are serious issues for specialty crop growers in the north central U.S., few sources of reliable data are available to document the extent of drift damage to these crops. States have procedures and agencies which growers can use to file complaints, but the complaint procedure involves additional work for growers already suffering from the drift damage and provides few incentives. Complaint investigations are slow and additional action is needed from the grower to receive compensation for losses. For those who market their products for processing, organic, or direct-to-consumer purchase, or are members of a tight-knit farming community, reporting may pose additional risks.

Using an anonymous survey, we hope to gain a more accurate view of the frequency, severity, and acres of specialty crops affected by dicamba and 2,4-D drift. This data is needed to make realistic policy decisions governing over-the-top use of these herbicides.

**Personnel and Support**

Our grant will support 7 hours per week of time for a Project Manager and 2-5 hours per week, as needed, for a Survey Technician. Project Manager and Survey Technician will have prior experience in communications, project management, and survey techniques, and will be familiar with drift issues and/or specialty crop organizations.

**Special Project Group**

The project’s success will also depend on engaging knowledgeable support partners. Special Project Group members will be asked to contribute their time in the following ways:

- attend 1 or more online planning and review meetings in fall 2020
- review survey tools and related materials
- assist as able with publicizing the study (as part of their regular outreach activities)
- provide specific technical advice and support as needed from the project manager
- attend 1-2 meetings in the spring 2021 to review results, and provide input on analysis and sharing results
- co-write or review white paper and possible journal article, if desired
Timeline and Study Objectives Overview

Our proposed survey project will span a year and includes opportunities to educate and promote this issue among growers, educators, and regulators in the industry. To help implement, we will form a Specialty Project Group of weed specialists, specialty crop educators and specialists, growers, educators, and other professionals who work in or with specialty crop industries. The Project Manager and Survey Technician will facilitate the actual study and related activities.

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<td>Draft, test, revise and finalize a survey tool with input from regulators, researchers, and growers.</td>
<td>Mail or email survey to selected random group of growers. Encourage responses through grower organizations, media, and reminder messages sent directly to sample group.</td>
<td>Enter and clean survey data, compile, summarize, analyze by region, crop, and other factors. Compare to state reporting data.</td>
<td>Work with partners to share meaningful data, results, and messages.</td>
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Prepare distribution lists, publicity, and IRB approval.

Objective 1 – Create a Survey Tool

- Project Manager will share a questionnaire and cover letter draft with the Special Project Group.
- The Special Project Group will review the survey questions and materials, discuss survey objectives, and establish survey sample group.

Objective 2 – Distribute Survey

- The Project Manager will purchase and/or prepare a distribution list.
- The Project Manager and Special Project Group will help promote the study to encourage response.
- Paper questionnaires, along with a cover letter and self-addressed stamped envelope, will be mailed in January with responses accepted until the end of April.
- An online survey will also be made available.
- Respondents will be tracked anonymously to allow a second mailing targeting non-respondents in late February.

Objective 3 – Analyze Responses

- Data will be entered as surveys are returned. Double entry will ensure accuracy.
- The Project Manager will present early data to the Special Project Group in June to discuss further analysis, main findings and messages.
• Further analysis will be done as deemed appropriate, which may include comparing data by region, commodity group, or other factors; or comparing response data to state regulatory agency data.
• The Special Project Group will assist with final review of data and help craft main findings/messages to be shared.

Objective 4 – Share Results
• The Project Manager, along with members of the Special Project Group, will develop a layman’s report which is graphically engaging, uses simple language, and presents main findings concisely. This will be shared through the IPM Center and directly with regional grower organizations, industry educators, and survey respondents who requested to see study results.
• A white paper will be developed for research and regulatory partners.
• The white paper will be further developed to submit to a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

Project Evaluation
A successful project will meet the above objectives within the designated study year. Ideally, we will:
• Achieve a response rate of 35-45% to provide accurate data.
• Broadly share information on this project and educational materials on drift that are available through the North Central IPM Center.
• Acquire data that will influence future regulatory decisions and pesticide education efforts.
• Publish and share results with the grower community to assess risk and inform management strategies.

This project has been approved for funding through the North Central IPM Center. The Regional IPM Centers are supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture through agreement 2018-70006-28884. Learn more about the North Central IPM Center at nicipmc.org.

If interested in being a part of our Special Project Group for this or other projects, please contact Cassandra Brown, Project Manager
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