

Throughout the past five years, the Center for Produce Safety has cultivated domestic and international research collaborations. The first of such efforts were partnerships through the U.S. - Israel Binational Agriculture Research and Development Fund and the California Leafy Greens Research Program. This year's Request for Proposals (RFP) has a diverse list of research partners. Through a series of articles, the various types of partnerships in the current RFP will be explored.

Pacific Northwest Tree Fruit Industry Sets Regional Research Priorities

Davis, CA, February 20, 2013 - This is the fourth year the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission (WTFRC) and the Center for Produce Safety (CPS) will collaborate to fund produce safety research. The alliance with WTFRC began with an introduction of the two entities by the Northwest Horticultural Council (NHC). Established in 1969, the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission has focused on funding research specific to industry identified needs, making it a natural partner for CPS.

The 2013 CPS call for research proposals identifies regional tree fruit food safety priorities. The Pacific Northwest tree fruit industry formed a food safety committee in 2007 with representatives from the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. It was understood that although there had never been a food safety incident with fresh whole tree fruit, if there was ever a problem, the entire industry would suffer the consequences. The industry took direction from the food safety committee as to what research questions needed to be answered. Annually, a research priority list was established, but it has been a challenge for the industry to review the quality and merit of many of the research grant proposals presented. The industry started working with the CPS to screen proposals and establish their merit for funding. The Pacific Northwest industry and CPS understand that research awards must meet the rigors of scientific and industry standards. Close collaboration between industry and scientists is the key to success.

Chris Schlect, president, Northwest Horticultural Council and CPS board member stated, "We appreciate the help provided by CPS in ensuring that food safety research needs of our tree fruit industry are met in a timely and effective fashion. Coordinating our food safety work in a regional way allows us to use scarce research dollars as efficiently as possible to obtain results that will provide needed practical help to our growers and shippers, while being credible with the general public and federal regulators. This cooperative process, nurtured by CPS, also allows us to gather additional natural funding partners, such as the state departments of agriculture of Oregon and Washington."

Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission Manager, James McFerson commented, "CPS provides an unprecedented and welcome opportunity to support research addressing critical food safety issues in a coordinated and systematic way. CPS leadership has not only leveraged significant financial resources but has fostered the development of a larger and more engaged research community." McFerson emphasized the importance of the relationship saying, "Regional organizations like the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission can now partner with CPS to conduct research and apply results that protect consumers and promote the economic viability of our tree fruit industry."

The Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission and the tree fruit industry in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) are interested in establishing a research program that will investigate the risk of pathogen contamination on fresh market tree fruit. The regional priorities include questions about tree fruit production, packing and storage.

Proposals will be reviewed by the CPS technical committee and PNW tree fruit technical experts. Awards will be announced Fall of 2013.

For further information about Pacific Northwest tree fruit research priorities, the CPS Request for Research guidance document, and a complete list of CPS research priorities, please visit the Center for Produce Safety website, <http://cps.ucdavis.edu>.

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