May 1, 2008

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

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro and Jack Kingston
Chairwoman and 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 (ipmPIPE) 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 ipmPIPE.

ipmPIPE 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 ipmPIPE saved farmers as much as $299 million in 2005 alone.

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

The ipmPIPE 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 ipmPIPE. We urge Congress to recognize its value to farmers throughout the country by including ipmPIPE in the FY 2009 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Addis Cates
Alabama Soybean Association
American Phytopathological Society
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
Arkansas Soybean Association
CropLife America

Georgia/Florida Soybean Association
GROWMARK, Inc.
Illinois Farm Bureau
Illinois Soybean Association
Indiana Soybean Alliance
Iowa Soybean Association
Kansas Soybean Association

Kentucky Soybean Association
Louisiana Soybean Association
Maryland Vegetable Growers Association
Michigan Soybean Association
Michigan Vegetable Council
Mid-Atlantic Soybean Association
Midwest Food Processors Association
Midwest Pickle Association
Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
Mississippi Soybean Association
Missouri Soybean Association
Mt. Olive Pickle Company
National Alliance of Independent Crop
Consultants
National Association of State Universities and
Land-Grant Colleges
National Farmers Union
National Watermelon Association
Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
Nebraska Soybean Association
North Carolina Greenhouse Growers
Association

North Carolina Pickle Producers Association
North Carolina Soybean Producers Association
North Carolina Vegetable Growers Association
North Carolina Watermelon Association
North Dakota Soybean Growers Association
Northern Nut Growers Association
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
Ohio Soybean Association
Oklahoma Soybean Association
Pickle Packers International
Society of American Florists
South Carolina Soybean Association
South Dakota Soybean Association
Tennessee Soybean Association
Texas Pecan Growers Association
Texas Soybean Association
U.S. Apple Association
United States Dry Bean Council
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
Virginia Soybean Association
West Central Cooperative
Wisconsin Soybean Association

Cc: Members of the Senate and House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee