



# USDA & EPA Mitigation Workshop for Specialty Crops

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SFIREG Spring Meeting

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# Workshop Structure

- Held on May 9, 2024 at EPA HQ with a virtual option
- Participants included: specialty crop grower representatives, research and extension weed scientists, Federal partners, IPM Center directors, IR-4, NGOs, industry representatives, AAPCO ESA committee members
- Meeting goals:
  1. EPA to update stakeholders on their progress on the Mitigation Menu proposed in the Draft Herbicide Strategy.
  2. Specialty crop growers and other stakeholders to provide input on their approach to mitigating runoff and erosion.
  3. Ample opportunity for discussion.

# Presentations

1. EPA's Ecological Mitigation Measures
  - Frank Farruggia, EPA
2. Implementation of Endangered Species Act Pesticide Mitigations: Localized Solutions for Diverse Cropping Systems in Washington and Oregon
  - Gary Bahr, WA State Dept of Ag.
3. Grower Perspectives on Herbicide Strategy Mitigation
  - Southeastern U.S.: Mike Aerts, Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association
  - Michigan: Laura Campbell, MI Farm Bureau
  - California: Jim Cranney, CA Citrus Quality Council

# Summary of Presentations (1)

- **EPA**
  - Summary of changes to the Draft Herbicide Strategy (HS) mitigation approach in the HS Update (4/16/24)
    - Additional mitigation measures added to the menu in response to public comments.
    - Proposed mitigation measures that need additional supporting data.
    - Fewer mitigation points required for areas with lower runoff potential.
  - Information needed to support additional mitigation practices.
- **Gary Bahr**
  - Summary of localized mitigation workshops held in WA and OR.
  - Highlighted the complexity of the current process of accessing Bulletins Live! Two and interpreting the mitigation requirements in the bulletins.
  - Model approach for regional engagement and education.

## Summary of Presentations (2)

- **Growers**
  - Examples of current conservation practices in FL, MI, and CA
    - Including practices not on the current menu of options, and some that may align with current practices but use different names.
  - Costs of mitigation practice implementation and the need for financial assistance.
  - State-level conservation programs available to support runoff and erosion mitigation.
    - Florida Dept of Ag and Consumer Services BMPs, MI Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program, CA Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (mandatory)

## Discussion Themes (1)

- Conservation Programs
  - Programs discussed have the same goals as EPA's mitigation menu: to reduce runoff and erosion, using many of the same practices.
  - In addition, programs can offer site-specific advice that goes beyond EPA's modeled predictions to result in a more effective approach.
  - Desire to make things easier for growers who are already following best practices.
  - How to verify that state programs meet EPA's goals?
- Unique questions for unique cropping systems (e.g., wild blueberries, cranberries, dryland sorghum)
- Regional variability (e.g., terminology, soil type, rainfall/irrigation, temperature, pest pressure)

## Discussion Themes (2)

- Implementation Questions
  - Need for education and training
  - Simplification for growers and applicators (e.g., an online tool to determine how many points are needed that interacts with BLT)
  - States will have an important role
  - Recordkeeping and verification vs. privacy and protection of personal data

## Next Steps

- Slides will be posted to EPA's website.
- EPA will consider stakeholder input from the workshop as they finalize the HS (by August 30).
- The mitigation menu for the HS will also inform the Insecticide and Fungicide strategies, but there will be additional complications and considerations for each.

A photograph of a vast field of yellow flowering rapeseed plants, likely canola, stretching to a distant horizon under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The field is in the foreground, sloping upwards towards the horizon.

# Questions?

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