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MITIGATING ENVIRONMENTAL RISK WITH INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

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USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) policy now mandates site-specific environmental risk analysis and appropriate mitigation for all pest management activities that pose substantial risk to natural resources. Airsheds, surface water bodies and groundwater that are in proximity to pesticide application often need special consideration for adequate resource protection. Institution of IPM in these agricultural fields can be an ideal tool towards protecting these areas. Conservation planners and other farm advisors can use the NRCS Windows Pesticide Screening Tool (WIN-PST) to evaluate site-specific pesticide environmental risk. WIN-PST qualitatively ranks the potential for pesticide transport via leaching below the root zone and runoff beyond the edge of the field. It then combines these exposure potentials with long-term pesticide toxicities to humans and aquatic life. The final results are hazard potentials to humans and fish from non-point source exposure. We are now working to add air quality risks to WIN-PST analysis. Working in partnership with other IPM practitioners, NRCS planners will use WIN-PST to guide producer selection of mitigating conservation practices and management techniques that help protect water and air quality. The overall goal of the new NRCS policy is to integrate environmentally sound pest management into all conservation plans.