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EPA'S STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL INITIATIVE: PROMOTING RISK REDUCTION ON MINOR-USE CROPS THROUGH OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS

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In response to the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) of 1996, EPA created the Regional Strategic Agricultural Initiative to support implementation and transition efforts by growers. FQPA mandated the reregistration of older pesticides and reassessment of pesticide tolerances in food, setting guidelines to protect vulnerable consumer groups such as children. The greatest impacts of FQPA are likely to be on minor-use crops, such as the fruits and vegetables that serve as mainstays in the diets of children. These impacts are driving forces in the adoption of new pest management strategies. Through cooperative efforts with growers, groups, University researchers, Extension personnel and others, the impacts of FQPA on minor-use growers can be reduced. The Strategic Agricultural Initiative has been implemented in each of EPA's 10 Regional offices. Regional specialists work to:

- Build partnerships with producers, commodity groups, Universities, and other agricultural stakeholders.
- Cooperate with USDA in the formation and use of the Regional Pest Management Centers.
- Through outreach, capture and share lessons learned about Integrated Pest Management.
- Provide routine feedback to EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) and USDA on producers, pest management issues and concerns.

Forming and strengthening innovative strategic partnerships with stakeholder groups is key to facilitating the adoption of reduced-risk tactics such as IPM. The EPA Regional Specialists serve to communicate regulatory decisions and their potential impacts to the agricultural community, and seek to facilitate the transition to reduced-risk alternatives in response to those impacts.