

NEW FARM BILL
SECTION 10202
National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)

Introduction and Background

In May 2008, H.R. 6124 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, otherwise known as the Farm Bill of 2008, became law. The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) was included in The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) Title X, Sec 10202. Beginning in FY 2009, it authorizes funding of \$20 million over four years (FY 2009-2012) to establish the NCPN for specialty crops to provide reliable sources of propagative material that are free of propagative-borne pathogens. Many perennial specialty crops are potentially included in this initiative. This provision would establish a network of clean plant centers in the United States that would conduct diagnostic and pathogen elimination services and to establish mother/foundation blocks (G1) to provide tested, virus-free plant materials to nurseries, growers and to state certification programs. This effort coincides with a desire by industry and Federal and state regulatory agencies to create a system of voluntary compliance to ensure that pests and diseases that can originate in, and be distributed by, the nursery industry are detected and eliminated before they become widespread.

In anticipation of Farm Bill funding to support the NCPN, APHIS has been working with early NCPN programs in California, New York, South Carolina, and Washington State to begin building regional clean plant partnerships that will ultimately support national initiatives. As a result of these initiatives, a grape NCPN and fruit tree NCPN are established by their respective stakeholders, with APHIS and the other USDA NCPN agencies serving to coordinate activities among the various clean plant programs. These include grape clean plant initiatives at the University of California at Davis and Cornell University and fruit tree clean plant initiatives at Washington State University and Clemson University.

A steering committee, with representatives from the nursery industry, the grower community, the National Plant Board and other state regulatory agencies, the land-grant university system, and USDA (APHIS, ARS and CSREES) was formed in November of 2006. The steering committee prepared a comprehensive review of existing “clean plant programs” and prioritized the list of specialty crops for funding. Realizing the funding may not be sufficient for supporting all the clean plant programs, the committee put the priority list into three categories in the order of funding priority. Stone fruit (including flowering), pome fruit, and grapes were included in category 1; citrus and strawberry are included in category 2; and ornamental crops (with high pest risk pathways) were included in category 3. The steering committee also developed a draft NCPN implementation plan.

This plan was discussed by broader stakeholders at an NCPN National workshop sponsored by APHIS at Riverdale, Maryland during May 2007. This workshop developed the mission and vision statement for NCPN and drafted the highlights of a strategic plan to be implemented through an interagency governing body comprising APHIS, ARS and CSREES. The current NCPN business plan was developed based on the strategic guidelines developed at the workshop.

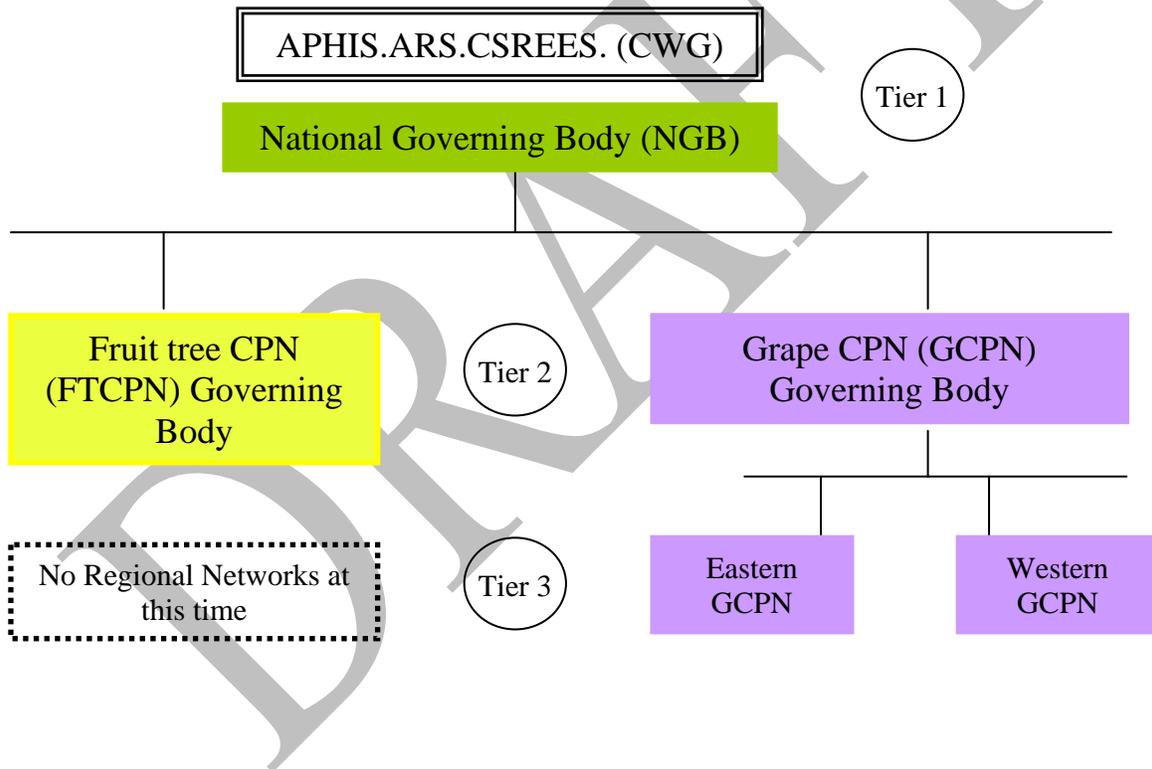
The NCPN governance is in place. It is governed by a central Core Working Group (CWG) comprising a member each from APHIS, ARS and CSREES. The CWG is assisted by a National Governing Body (NGB) comprising of 5 state and federal invited members (Tier 1). Currently

grape and fruit tree commodity networks constitute NCPN and each has their own governance at national (tier2) and regional level (tier3) and operates on their own charter. These governing bodies have representatives from the nursery industry, grower community, state regulators, research, and extension personnel.

The NGB and CWG are assisted by an NCPN coordinator, a permanent full time APHIS senior staff member. This NCPN coordinator also works as liaison for all the stakeholders and ensures communication occurs among all network components. The NCPN coordinator represents NGB and CWG for day-to-day operations and makes administrative decisions.

The list of the past NCPN steering committee members; current governance structure and members; the minutes of the past meetings can be obtained from NCPN website at <http://groups.ucanr.org/ncpn/>.

NCPN ORGANIZATION CHART (January, 2009)



NATIONAL CLEAN PLANT NETWORK (NCPN)

Mission

The NCPN provides high quality asexually propagated plant material free of targeted plant pathogens and pests that cause economic loss to protect the environment and ensure the global competitiveness of specialty crop producers.

Vision

The NCPN's regional centers of excellence are recognized leaders in the introduction of the highest quality, regionally adapted, true-to-type propagative plant materials that are free of targeted plant pathogens and pests, thus promoting a vigorous commercial environment and the opportunity for international trade while protecting the environment of North America. Translational research, education and extension initiatives are fully funded to maintain the network's high quality collections and strengthen its services. Industry, research and regulatory communities collaborate to ensure an abundant supply of healthy specialty crops. The economic, environmental and social sustainability of specialty crop industries and the improved economies of the communities that depend on these industries are the ultimate impacts of the NCPN's robust service delivery.

Benefits to Small Producers and Distributors

Healthy, clean planting stock is the key to the cost-effective production of horticultural crops and is necessary for U.S. agriculture, especially for small agricultural operations, to remain internationally competitive and economically viable. The process of creating disease-free planting stock takes many years and can be cost-prohibitive for individual growers. Through NCPN support, clean stock plants will be both readily available and provided at low cost to recipients, who will primarily be small to mid-sized, local agricultural industries, such as family-owned plant nurseries and growers whose disease-free crops will result in increased commodity quality, yield, and export potential. While creating and maintaining clean stock is expensive, the cost for controlling or eradicating a pest outbreak that might result from planting infested stock would be far greater. Another component of the NCPN program, comprising about 10% of apportioned resources, is an extension and outreach service designed to inform small and mid-sized producers about the benefits of using certified clean plant stock and to connect these producers with the sources of the plant material. The most efficient approach to producing healthy planting stock is through programs like NCPN which screen valuable plant selections for diseases that can be spread by contaminated plant stock and reduce the chance of introduction of exotic pests that can be difficult and costly to control. The NCPN will go a long way towards helping small producers and distributors to prosper.

**GOALS FOR THE RESOURCING AND IMPLEMENTATION
OF FARM BILL SECTION 10202
NATIONAL CLEAN PLANT NETWORK (NCPN)
BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE YEAR 2009 - 2012
(\$5Million/year)**

Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Actions

1. Governance and structure

1.1 Establish a National Governing body for NCPN governance: It is governed by a central Core Working Group (CWG) comprising a member each from APHIS, ARS and CSREES. The CWG is assisted by a National Governing Body (NGB) comprising of 5 state and federal invited members.

1.2 Develop and implement a commodity based management and governance structure through regional and national governing bodies:

The NCPN will create commodity based governing bodies composed of industry stakeholders, academic and state and federal government representatives who will develop standard operating procedures to be followed throughout the network. Members will be elected, nominated or invited based on expertise and geographical location to represent the specialty crops served by the NCPN. The governing bodies will establish work groups as needed and will provide the work groups with guidelines for their operation. All operating procedures will be published and provided to stakeholders for input. Stakeholder input will be used to modify operating procedures as needed and operating procedures will be validated prior to implementation. A consultative process will be used that involves all stakeholders to ensure relevance of the material inventoried in working collections.

1.3 Establish and maintain website and databases: NCPN will establish public and member-only websites, listserv and provide links to existing clean plant programs. NCPN develops a common information technology (IT) platform to integrate the existing and future databases/registries.

1.4 Hold annual meetings among network members at regular intervals.

1.5 NCPN will develop administrative and record keeping assets, methods and service that will ensure the security, continuity and accuracy of all its activities, products and services.

NCPN allocates 5% for Governance. These funds will be utilized for:

- *Two non-Federal administrative & coordinator positions each for national grape and fruit tree network (Tier 2) to be filled at university, State, or other cooperator levels*
- *Conducting regional and national meetings*
- *Need based travel assistance to non-Federal government participants and State, university, or industry personnel*

The funds shall not be used for:

- *The Federal Core Working Group’s travel and personnel including NCPN National Coordinator position*

NCPN allocates 5% for IT infrastructure. These funds will be utilized for:

- *Development, maintenance, and networking of IT platform for databases*
- *Development and maintenance of stakeholder driven NCPN website and listserv*

2. Operations: The NCPN will provide rapid and safe introduction and release of clean plant materials for planting from foreign and domestic sources for commercial development.

2.1 Sustain and enhance the current capabilities to meet the industry needs: The NCPN will establish, maintain and enhance a network of facilities and expertise for testing and providing therapy for clones of specialty crops based on climatic suitability, current infrastructure and expertise, regional needs and disease and insect pest safety standards. The NCPN will use the best available methods to release pathogen and insect pest tested planting material in a safe and timely fashion. The NCPN will provide foundation stock to industry within prescribed state and federal certification schemes. The NCPN will maintain collections in accordance with standards published by NCPN. Standards will meet or exceed standards of any federal import requirements and state certification requirement needed for practical distribution of collection material. The NCPN will develop procedures and fee schedules specific to proprietary clones.

NCPN allocates 60% for operation of commodity networks. These funds will be utilized for:

- *Operation of stakeholder driven clean plant networks*
- *Infrastructure enhancement and equipment purposes relating to efficient management of networks on case-by-case as determined by NCPN National Governing Body*

The funds shall not be used for:

- *The state certification programs and maintenance of G2 and G3 blocks. [See part on Farm Bill Section 10201(e) Safeguarding Nursery Production for more information on state certification programs]*
- *Construction of new facilities*

3. Methods Development:

3.1. The NCPN will develop rapid, accurate testing techniques to meet the needs of regulators and the industry. The NCPN will investigate and develop methods to improve the current diagnostic methods throughput and sensitivity.

3.2. The NCPN will develop therapeutic methods for infected materials. The NCPN will investigate, determine, validate and implement the most appropriate methods for effective and rapid elimination of pathogens and insect pests from specialty crops for planting.

3.3. The NCPN will establish diagnostic guidelines, standards for different crop species for certification maintenance. The NCPN will facilitate optimization and validation of pathogen and pest detection methods according to accepted protocols to satisfy regulatory needs.

NCPN allocates 10% for methods development and validations. These funds will be utilized for:

- *Programs for development and validation of new and or improved diagnostics*
- *Programs for development of rapid elimination of pathogens and pests*

The funds shall not be used for:

- *Any administrative work for documentation of Protocols or SOPs*

4. Extension and outreach

4.1 NCPN will seek to develop partnerships with land-grant and other university based extension and outreach services to interact with commercial nurseries, industry associations, and producers. NCPN will encourage, develop and engage all possible extension, education and outreach resources that will interact with and train key stakeholders, such as commercial nurseries and growers who propagate their own material to ensure the successful dissemination and use of NCPN products and services.

NCPN allocates 10% for extension and outreach activities. These funds will be utilized for:

- *Extension and outreach activities for growers*

5. Audit and quality control

5.1 The NCPN will develop a plan to evaluate the performance of the programs.

The National Governance Body (NGB), with input from NCPN national and regional commodity governance groups and the stakeholder working groups, will establish the process and timetable for program evaluation. The audits shall be programmatic and financial; and shall focus on evaluating performance benchmarks and for making future NCPN support decisions.

NCPN allocates 10% for audit, quality control, and miscellaneous expenditure. These funds will be utilized for:

- *Audit expenses including travel on need basis*

Farm Bill Section 10202

PROPOSED FUNDING DISTRIBUTION \$5,000,000 AVAILABLE IN FY2009-2012

Proposed Activity Area (Funding is “no year” and any unobligated carryover will be spent on the same ratio.)

1. Governance & IT infrastructure @ 10%	\$ 500,000
2. Operation of commodity networks @ 60%	\$ 3,000,000
3. Methods Development @ 10%	\$ 500,000
4. Outreach & Education @ 10%	\$ 500,000
5. Audit, QA and Miscellaneous @ 10%	\$ 500,000
TOTAL FUNDING	\$ 5,000,000

PROPOSED PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Measure	Status	Target/Goal
Number of Clean Plant Networks (by commodity)	2 Networks (Grape and Fruit Tree)	4 Networks (add't 2 commodities TBD)
% of material processed through the Clean Plant Network within requested timeframes	2 Networks currently operating on a limited basis	Establish baseline data in FY 2010

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