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Jan. 25, 2011 (11-3)
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Six Organizations Honored by the Department of Pesticide Regulation for Reducing Pesticide Use

(Editors/reporters: Honorees are based in Alameda, Contra Costa, Mendocino, Sacramento, Santa Cruz, Solano and Yolo counties.)

SACRAMENTO – On Jan. 27, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) will recognize a diverse group of businesses and organizations as 2010 IPM Innovators. They control insects, weeds, rodents and other pests with a combination of natural and preventive strategies and pesticides less toxic than traditional treatments.

“Integrated pest management, or IPM, is being used by this year’s honorees in innovative and effective ways to reduce pesticide use,” DPR Director Mary-Ann Warmerdam said today. “We are proud to showcase their efforts that range from free tours of native plant gardens that thrive without pesticides, pioneering strategies to grow organic walnuts and winegrapes, technology that helps farmers make data-driven decisions and incentives to encourage more environmentally friendly pest control.”

Warmerdam will present the IPM Innovator Awards at 1:30 p.m. Thursday in the Sierra Hearing Room on the second floor of the California Environmental Protection Agency building in Sacramento. The public is invited.

This year’s recipients are:

- Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour, Contra Costa County
- Dixon Ridge Farms, Solano and Yolo Counties
- Bonterra (Fetzer) Vineyards, Mendocino County
- Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California, Sacramento County
- SureHarvest, Santa Cruz County
- University of California Statewide IPM Program and Natural Resources Conservation Service Partnership

Since IPM Innovator awards were initiated in 1994, more than 100 California organizations have been recognized for their efforts to reduce risks associated with pesticide use and for sharing their research and methods with others. Candidates are evaluated in seven categories: innovation; value; effectiveness; supports research; organizational education; outreach; and leadership.

A brief description of the 2010 IPM Innovators follows:

Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour

The Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour, which attracts more than 6,000 participants annually, is a free, self-driven tour of gardens in Alameda and Contra Costa counties that contain at least 50 percent native plants and are free of synthetic pesticides. The tour demonstrates that both seasoned and novice gardeners can implement sustainable practices that protect the environment. In 2010, 20 percent of the gardens on the tour were hosted by people who had attended the event, been inspired by it and transformed their gardens.

The primary goal of the tour is to motivate attendees to garden with California native plants to eliminate pesticide use, preventing contaminated runoff to urban creeks and San Francisco Bay. Other goals are saving water, generating less solid waste and providing habitat for wildlife. The gardens on the tour show that California native plants are beautiful and display a sense of place that is uniquely Californian.

Planning for the seventh annual tour in May is already under way. The tour is supported with funding from local stormwater control agencies and a native plant sale held in conjunction with the tour and donations. More information is available on the tour's Web site, www.BringingBackTheNatives.net, or by contacting coordinator Kathy Kramer at Kathy@KathyKramerConsulting.net or 510/236-9558.

Dixon Ridge Farms

This Solano and Yolo counties-based pioneer in sustainable walnut production took a sustainable farming and processing system that works for smaller, diversified farming and raised it to the commercial scale. Its cover-crop management technique provides habitat for beneficial insects, produces seed and returns organic matter to preserve soil fertility.

The walnut growing and processing operation converted to organic production in 1989 after implementing a number of IPM practices to control pests and water runoff. These include replacing synthetic nitrogen fertilizers with composted turkey manure; incorporating chipped prunings back into the orchard; encouraging beneficial insects; using earthworms to improve water infiltration and soil health and prevent rootrot; and freezing insects to death rather than killing them with methyl bromide during processing. The business has further reduced its environmental footprint by converting walnut shells

into energy, using recycled materials in its packaging and installing solar panels on its buildings.

Dixon Ridge Farms has collaborated with researchers on a number of projects and hosted hundreds of workshops, conference and field days. More information is available at www.dixonridgefarms.com or by contacting Manager Jenny Lester Moffitt at jenny@dixonridgefarms.com or 530/795-4619.

Bonterra (Fetzer) Vineyards

This top producer of organic winegrapes in California is a wine industry pioneer, using certified organic practices and an IPM approach to manage pests on its 950 acres in Mendocino County. The Bonterra (Fetzer) brand is the No. 1 selling wine made with organic grapes in the United States.

For more than 20 years, Bonterra Vineyards has been an innovator in developing cover crops to attract beneficial insects; using weather forecasting to monitor for pests and diseases; mechanically controlling under-the-vine weeds; and conserving and enhancing habitat to attract beneficial insects and birds. On some of its vineyards, Bonterra also grazes sheep and chickens between vines to control pests and weeds and provide soil nutrients. In addition, it has collaborated with the local Resource Conservation District on creek restoration projects.

Bonterra has a long history of working with University of California Cooperative Extension scientists and others on pest management and related research. Bonterra staff regularly provide education through seminars, workshops, conferences, field events and technical advising to growers on organic and sustainable viticulture practices. More information is available at www.bonterra.com or by contacting Maggie Peak, public relations manager, at maggie_peak@b-f.com or 502/774-7140.

Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California

This Sacramento-based nonprofit that represents 63 mosquito and vector control districts promotes IPM principles to control mosquitoes and other vectors to protect public health. It has been a leader in the transition from vector management based primarily on pesticides to IPM strategies that include water management and biological controls. This change includes a switch from broad-spectrum pesticides targeted at adult mosquitoes to less-toxic pest-specific larvicides such as insect growth regulators and biopesticides.

The association educates government agencies and environmental groups about IPM to control mosquitoes in wetlands, storm drains and other permanent and temporary water sources; rears and provides mosquito fish as a form of biological control; and

works with banks and realtors to prevent foreclosed home swimming pools from becoming mosquito breeding sites. The association worked with state departments to develop a manual, *Best Management Practices for Mosquito Control on California State Properties*, available at www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/CDPHBMPMosquitoControl6_08.pdf. It also helped develop CalSurv, a nationally recognized surveillance system that monitors West Nile virus (WNV) activity by testing mosquitoes, dead birds, sentinel chickens, horses and people.

The association produces posters, fliers and other outreach materials for its members and partners designed to educate the general public about the importance of eliminating standing water where mosquitoes could breed and other IPM strategies to prevent exposure to WNV and other vector-borne diseases. More information about the association is available at www.mvcac.org or by contacting Executive Director Catherine Smith at casmith@mvcac.org or 916/440-0826.

SureHarvest

This privately held company based in Santa Cruz County was founded in 1999 to develop farming management information systems and sustainability self-assessment programs that help growers make data-driven decisions about IPM and other sustainable farming practices.

In 2001, SureHarvest was hired by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance to head an effort that resulted in the Sustainable Winegrowing Program. Building on the work of the Lodi Woodbridge Winegrape Commission, SureHarvest President and Chief Executive Officer Jeff Dlott led a team of scientists and others to develop the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices, a self-assessment, Web-based program. The intent of this first-in-the-nation program is to improve sustainable agricultural performance with specific benchmarks. It now covers more than 68 percent of California's 526,000 winegrape acres.

SureHarvest is extending its self-assessment model to almonds, pears, pistachios, walnuts, tomatoes, peppers, stone fruit, raisins, table grapes, carrots and other specialty crops. The National Grape and Wine Initiative is studying the California program as a model for adaptation to other winegrowing areas throughout the country. More information is available at www.sureharvest.com or by contacting Jeff Dlott at jdlott@sureharvest.com or 831/477-7797.

University of California Statewide IPM Program and Natural Resources Conservation Service Partnership

The University of California Statewide IPM Program (UCIPM) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with other groups and

individuals, have significantly increased their efforts to promote IPM in California over the past two years. UCIPM develops and promotes integrated ecologically sound pest management programs in California for farmers, urban communities and natural resource managers. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to protect farmland and the environment. The East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District (RCD), one of the cooperators in the partnership, also stands out for its efforts to promote IPM locally.

The NRCS-UCIPM partnership has defined and clarified effective IPM practices for a wide range of commodities and provided appropriate stakeholders with this information and incentives to increase their adoption and implementation. In 2007 and 2008, approximately 117,000 acres of California farmland were under NRCS pest management contracts, and growers representing some 18,000 acres implemented year-round IPM programs.

Examples of the partnership's efforts include development of year-round IPM programs for 19 different crops, including nut and fruit trees, row crops and vegetables. These programs help to reduce pesticides in water runoff and volatile organic compound pesticide emissions that contribute to smog. The partnership also resulted in cross training between the two organizations and financial incentives for private-sector consultants to develop IPM plans for farmers. The RCD promoted development of IPM plans and year-round programs with local farmers and private consultants, resulting in significant gains in implementation of IPM. More information is available at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov or www.ipm.ucdavis.edu or by contacting NRCS State Resource Conservationist Diane Holcomb at diane.holcomb@ca.usda.gov or 530/792-5667.

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One of five departments and boards within the California Environmental Protection Agency, DPR regulates the registration, sale and use of pesticides to protect people and the environment. For more information about DPR and previous IPM Innovators, see www.cdpr.ca.gov.

* A map of the meeting location may be found at www.calepa.ca.gov/EPABldg/Location.htm. All visitors to the Cal/EPA building are required to sign in and receive a security badge. Valid picture identification may be required. Please allow up to 15 minutes for this process.