

Integrated Pest Management – Frequently Asked Question

1. What does "IPM" stand for?

"IPM" stands for Integrated Pest Management.

2. What is the definition of IPM?

In general, IPM seeks to use two or more alternative methods to control pests with a goal of obtaining effective control with a minimum dependence on pesticides. IPM is information intensive and depends on:

1. regular scouting of the crop,
2. records kept of pests observed,
3. comparing pest numbers to established threshold to determine if a treatment is justified or needed,
4. evaluating results and
5. using records (history) to plan future actions.

3. Why use IPM?

Several Reasons:

1. Target pests tend to build resistance to pesticides that are repetitively applied, thus rendering the products ineffective very rapidly. This is expensive for the grower and the manufacturing company and makes the pest harder to control over time. IPM systems extend the useful life of pesticides when used in conjunction with other non-chemical strategies.
2. Most pesticides are poisons that are introduced into our environment. This poses potential health risks to the applicator, other non-target organisms, surface water and ground water supplies. By reducing dependence on pesticides, we reduce the risk to ourselves and the environment.

4. What are the alternative controls available?

The controls available are:

1. Genetic - identifying and using pest resistant seeds and plants.
2. Biological - taking advantage of naturally occurring adversarial relationships to control pests. This includes introducing, or preserving, predator, parasites or diseases of pests, etc. in the management pictures.
3. Cultural - using a combination of management practices to control pests. In the case of crops; rotating crops, varying rows width, distance between plants, time of planting, time of harvest, cultivation, use of mulches, etc. are examples of cultural controls. In the case of structural pest control, a good sanitation and maintenance program can go a long way toward maintaining a pest free environment.

4. Chemical (Pesticides) - advocates the judicious use of pesticides when the combination of alternatives listed above does not obtain acceptable controls. In some uses the pesticide chosen is used in combination with other controls while in others, pesticides may be the only alternative available. The term "pesticides" covers a wide variety of products with a wide range of toxicity, from inorganic compounds to the more benign products of Safer's soap, horticultural oils, Bt's and insect growth regulators. IPM promotes the use of the least toxic, shortest duration pesticide available, targeted to the specific pest to be controlled.
5. **Isn't IPM just another name for "organic pest control"?**
No. Organic has strict restrictions as to which, if any, synthetically compounded chemical pesticides can be used to control pests. IPM systems allow for the use of chemicals but they must be properly timed and targeted to the pest species and life cycle. Chemical use in an IPM program is integrated with non-chemical strategies for controlling pests and an attempt is made to use the least-toxic alternative available.