

ILLINOIS CORN PEST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

D. E. Kuhlman^{1/}

INTRODUCTION

An Illinois Pest Management Pilot Program was initiated with corn growers in Boone County in 1972 and expanded in 1973 to include cooperators in Hancock, Shelby, and Warren counties. Funding for 1973-75 was provided by the Federal Extension Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the USDA. The program is interdisciplinary involving Weed Science and Entomology.

Basically the pest management program utilizes "scouts" to monitor insect and weed problems in fields of corn from June to August. Fields were inspected on a weekly basis to determine the kind and number of insects and weeds present. The data collected by the scouts enabled the growers to know if control is needed for a particular pest and when the measures should be applied. The scouts were trained and supervised by Extension personnel. The scouting program was made available to volunteer growers, without charge, during 1973-75.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the program was to help growers to implement pest management procedures that will provide adequate plant protections and assure a viable agriculture and environment. Other objectives were:

1. To test methods and feasibility of a weed and insect scouting program on corn in Illinois.
2. To detect pest problems before they reached economic thresholds.
3. To use pesticides on the basis of need.
4. To determine if the pest management program results in increased profit for the farmer cooperators.
5. To teach growers the concepts and use of pest management scouting systems.

GENERAL

Initiating and implementing a pest management program (PMP) entails the development of many techniques and systems and involved some trial and error. The first year was used to hire and train personnel, develop and test survey techniques, develop report forms for use in the field, establish areas for scouting, enroll cooperators, develop procedures for reporting field data to cooperators, and develop a computer program to analyze and store the scouting information.

^{1/} Extension Entomologist and Assistant Professor of Agricultural Entomology.

The Illinois PMP had 123 cooperators with 12,346 acres of corn in Boone, Hancock, Shelby, and Warren counties in 1973. One scout was employed by each county and monitored approximately 3,000 acres of corn during the growing season. In 1974, the number of PMP cooperators increased to 144 and the corn acreage to 22,420 acres. Two scouts were employed in each of the four counties. In 1975, ninety-one growers participated in the scouting program with 21,756 acres of corn.

GROWER ACCEPTANCE

It is the general consensus of the cooperators that the pest management scouting program is a good service. Federal funding will not be available to pay the cost of scouting in 1976. Consequently, growers desiring to continue the program will have to bear the entire cost of the scouts' salary and travel expenses. Thus far, 33 of 91 cooperators have announced their intentions to pay \$1.25 to \$1.50 per acre to hire scouts to monitor 7,100 acres of corn in Boone, Hancock, and Warren counties in 1976. The Cooperative Extension Service will train and supervise the scouts.

SUMMARY

If pest management programs are feasible, who will administer them? How will it be financed? In all probability, the Cooperative Extension Service will be able to provide the training for scouts and pest management supervisory personnel. Pest management programs will be financed principally by growers. The delivery systems are yet to be determined. Several that are likely to be used are:

1. Private pest control consultants.
2. Commercial pesticide applicators.
3. Grower operated and--controlled associations.

The backbone of a pest management system is total crop management, entailing interdisciplinary action by the University and agricultural industry. In other words, we are in the process of evolving to a "total crop management" system rather than just a "bug-a-week" scouting program.

A PMP will help insure that pesticides are used when and where needed and applied in the proper manner. A PMP will not eliminate the need for pesticides, nor does it necessarily reduce the total use. We believe the PMP will appeal to farmers with large operations, who rely upon someone else to monitor their fields.