



Insight

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After Nearly 30 Years, Biza Leaves MIRC Board

When Greg Biza started out as an alternate on the MIRC Board of Directors, the average cost of a new house in the U.S. was \$122,000, the average yearly income was \$30,000 and a gallon of gas cost \$1.05.

That may provide some perspective on just how long Biza, who started on the Board in 1992 and left the Board this past January, served the industry.

Biza, vice president and technical director at RCB International in Albany, Oregon, served the MIRC in several roles over the years, including six-year stints as chair of both the Varietal Improvement Committee and the Scientific Affairs Committee, including two separate terms as Chairman of the Board.

Before joining RCB International, Biza spent a long tenure at Callisons, first as

manager of research and development, then as vice president/technical director and finally as senior vice president of research and development. He spent the first ten years of his professional career with Fritzsche Dodge and Olcott.

Biza, who holds a master's degree in organic chemistry from Rutgers University, said it has been an honor to serve on the Board of Directors for the MIRC, an organization he describes as forward-thinking and integral to the success of the mint industry.

"The MIRC has been ahead of the curve on a lot of things over the years," Biza said.

In the mid-1990s, for example, behind the MIRC's directive, the mint industry became just the second in the U.S. to join the EPA's Pesticide Stewardship



Greg Biza, Vice President and Technical Director at RCB International in Albany, Oregon.

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Partnership, a partnership program that works with the pesticide-user community to reduce human health and environmental risk of pesticide use. The organization has also been instrumental in the development of varieties that, while still not resistant to *Verticillium* wilt, are moderately resistant, and in development of techniques and tools that aid in the control and assessment of the disease. And the organization has helped ensure that growers have a substantial toolbox of crop protection compounds registered to produce mint in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner.

Biza also pointed to efforts to improve irrigation efficiency as an example of the benefits the MIRC has brought to the industry, as well as efforts to help ease the burden of regulatory challenges facing the industry and to increase use of mint, both in traditional uses and through the development of alternative uses.

Biza believes one reason the MIRC has been successful is its vertical integration.

“One of the great strengths of this organization is that it is vertically integrated,” Biza said. “We have the growers, the intermediates and the actual end-users involved.”

Biza sees many challenges ahead for the MIRC and the mint industry. There is the wilt that has dogged the production of mint and is expected to continue to be an issue for years to come. And there are multiple regulatory challenges, as well as challenges with consumer perceptions of agriculture, most of which are based on emotion, rather than on science.

The good news for the MIRC is Biza isn’t leaving the organization, just retiring from the Board.

“Apparently, some folks want me to stick around on the Varietal Improvement Committee,” he said.

Two New Modes of Action in Nematode Control

Research into two alternative products for nematode control in mint is showing promise. And, as a bonus, Velum Prime and Salibro bring two new modes of action into the fight against nematodes.

“These are exciting developments,” said Saad Hafez, professor of nematology at the University of Idaho, who has worked on nematode control in agriculture for more than 50 years, including for 40 years at the University of Idaho. “We haven’t seen any new modes of action for a long time. And these are very safe products. We don’t have toxicity problems in the plant or in the soil.”

Neither product is yet registered for use in mint, but given that the IR-4 Project was preparing to submit the Velum Prime registration packet this spring, the Bayer product could be labeled for use in mint by this time next year. EPA typically takes 12 to 18 months to approve a product after packets are submitted, providing all paperwork is complete and other factors fall into place, according to Steve Salisbury,

research and regulatory coordinator for the MIRC.

Hafez’s experience with the products dates back several years to when he began working with Velum Prime in potatoes. He is currently working on devising optimum use patterns for Velum Prime in mint.

“We are trying to do an application early in the spring, a second application six weeks later and we are looking at having a third application after harvest,” he said.

Velum Prime is labeled for two applications in potatoes and other crops, but not for a third application, leading to a question of whether the third application will gain approval from EPA.

In potatoes, Velum Prime is used at planting.

Hafez started working on Salibro, a Corteva product, in mint last year.

As effective as the products are, Hafez said neither can compare to

the older nematicides for controlling nematodes. “These new compounds aren’t as effective as Temik and certain organophosphates,” Hafez said. “But these are very safe products.”

All uses of Temik, or aldicarb, a synthetic carbamate that was used extensively in potatoes but not in mint, were discontinued in the U.S. in August of 2018. Another aldicarb product, AgLogic, distributed by a company by the same name, is currently available for use on sugar beets, cotton and other crops, but not mint.

Today’s standard products for nematode control in mint, Vydate, also a carbamate, and Mocap, an organophosphate, are on the EPA’s short list of insecticides that could be discontinued in the future.



Nematologist Inducted into Idaho Mint Hall of Fame

When it comes to controlling nematodes in agricultural production systems, few have the depth of knowledge of University of Idaho nematology professor Saad Hafez.

Hafez, 74, has spent more than 50 years researching nematodes, including 40 at the University of Idaho, where he has mostly concentrated on nematode control in potato and sugar beet production systems. He has spent the past decade working on controlling nematodes in mint, and last year, Hafez was inducted into the Idaho Mint Hall of Fame.

“It felt great to get that recognition,” Hafez said.

The Idaho Mint Growers Association presented Hafez a plaque in recognition of the induction at the Association’s annual meeting in December.

Tony Weitz, chair of the Idaho Mint Commission, said the recognition was well deserved. “Saad has done valuable research for us over the last ten years on the effects of nematodes on mint and we felt this was an honor befitting his contribution to our industry.”



Saad Hafez being inducted into the Idaho Mint Hall of Fame at the Association’s Annual Meeting.

Steve Salisbury, who started his career as a University of Idaho Extension agent in Twin Falls, said Hafez is a world-renowned nematologist and has a wealth of knowledge surrounding the biology and control of nematodes.

“I can call him up and ask about some new material that is being looked at for nematode control and he’ll go, ‘Oh, yeah, I worked with that years ago and this is what we found.’ He is a wealth

of knowledge,” Salisbury said. “There is even a species of nematode named after him.”

The nematode, *Longidorella saadi*, which Hafez discovered, was named after Hafez by the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux International, a British-based organization, in 2007.

Hafez said he has no immediate plans to retire.

Tough Okayed for Use in Seven States

For the fourth consecutive year, Belchim Crop Protection has announced that Tough 5EC herbicide has been granted a Section 18 Emergency Use Exemption for post-emergent control of herbicide resistant weeds in mint. The exemption was granted in Idaho, Indiana, Washington, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Oregon and Michigan.

Since 2017, when it was first granted an emergency use exemption, Tough 5EC

has become a staple for growers looking to control resistant broadleaf weeds between cuts in double-cut systems. The herbicide, with the active ingredient pyridate, is recommended for control of a broad spectrum of difficult-to-control broadleaf weeds, including kochia, lambsquarters, nightshades and resistant pigweeds.

The effective use dates for the Section 18 may vary between states. Be sure to refer

to the state approved label for the valid use dates.

Colleen Tocci, communications and product manager for Belchim, said that the EPA is expected to grant Tough 5EC full federal registration before the end of summer.

“We expect it to be fully available for sale to the Mint, Chickpea and Corn markets throughout the U.S. in 2021,” Tocci said.

Colgate Campaign Features Mint Farmers

Colgate-Palmolive is telling mint's story by highlighting farmers. And from all indications, people are listening.

The multinational consumer products company has launched a campaign to make a connection between consumers and the products they are purchasing by highlighting mint growers in in-store campaigns, social media and other advertising outlets. And, according to Liz Suspanic, brand manager at Colgate-Palmolive, surveys reveal that people exposed to the campaign are more likely to associate real mint with personal-care products and have a better understanding of where mint is produced.

The idea behind the campaign is that the modern consumer wants to know what is in the food and personal-care products he or she purchases, how it was made or grown and where it was grown.

"When we tell our story, everyone benefits, because the consumer values the product more," Suspanic said in a presentation she provided participants at the MIRC annual meeting in January.

Brand trust, she said, today is ranked as the second highest priority in

purchasing decisions for personal-care and food products, behind only price. "So, how do you establish trust with consumers?" she asked. "A key is transparency."

Suspanic described transparency as "removing this wall that we've had in the past between the consumer and everyone behind the product that they are using. We need to share information about the ingredients, the people and the places behind that product that they are using.

"So, how do we share this information in an engaging way, other than just an ingredient label?" she asked. "We do this through story telling."

Colgate-Palmolive's campaign included creating a baseline of consumer understanding of personal-care products, including whether consumers believed that toothpaste and mouthwash products contained real mint and whether consumers knew that North America is one of the largest producers of mint.

The company found that only a quarter of people recognized that North America is a large producer of mint, only a third thought toothpaste contained real mint, and even less thought mouthwash and chewing gum contained real mint.

After being exposed to in-store campaigns highlighting mint growers, the company found a 56 percent increase in the likelihood of associating real mint with toothpaste, and the company saw a significant increase in sales, Suspanic said.

"Additionally," she said, "more people know that North America is a key region and a primary producer of mint than they did before (being exposed to the campaign)."



Caleb St. Hilaire, JSH Farms, Oregon highlighted in a free standing insert.

To date, the campaign has involved photo shoots and video compilations featuring mint farmers that the company uses to develop in-store campaigns, as well as 15-second ads that are aired across digital channels and are focused on millennial targets. The company also launched a web page that features information about its mint sourcing that it runs on its site. On National Farmers Day, Colgate-Palmolive did a series of social media posts that ran on Instagram and



Liz Suspanic, brand manager at Colgate-Palmolive, speaks to attendees of the 2020 MIRC Annual Meeting



Jeff Fervida, Meadowmint Farms, Indiana standing next to a Midwest display.



The Thackers, Bow Island Farms, Alberta featured on a point of purchase display.

Facebook. Additionally, the company ran e-commerce on Amazon pages. And the company ran several in-store campaigns, featuring impact displays, that highlighted mint farmers.

“Retailers in the U.S. and Canada were excited about this campaign,” Suspanic said. She noted that one major retailer ran the campaign twice in one year, which is highly unusual. The campaign in Canada also included digital banner ads on the retailer’s web pages.

“For us at Colgate, it was very exciting that we knew that people are more likely to associate real mint with Colgate toothpaste than prior to seeing the ad or campaign,” Suspanic said.

“When we tell our story, everyone benefits, because the consumer values the product more.”

Liz Suspanic,
Brand Manager at Colgate-Palmolive

“Beyond that, people enjoyed the advertisement. Forty-four percent of people watched all the way through that fifteen-second ad, even though they had the option to hit skip.

“We are absolutely thrilled to partner with you all to start telling this story,” she said.

Ray Baker Fills in on WSU Weed Science

For two years now, Ray Baker has been writing and submitting research proposals, collecting data and compiling reports on weed research in mint, duties not in his job description.

Baker is an ag research technician for Washington State University, a position designed to support research led by scientists such as Rick Boydston, whom Baker worked under for most of his nearly 30 years on the Prosser Irrigated Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

With Boydston’s departure two years ago, however, Baker’s role has changed.

“I’m doing a lot of the same things I did with Rick for 29 years,” Baker said. “I have always applied the herbicides and I would go out and help him rate the plots. Now I’m also writing the proposals, getting the funding and reporting on the data.”

The good news, Baker said, is he is comfortable in his new role, a role, incidentally, he did for two years in the 1990s during a stretch when Boydston

left the USDA’s Agricultural Research Service to work in the private sector. But it’s not a role he relishes. As evidence, Baker noted that when Boydston returned to Prosser after his two-year hiatus, Baker considered it a godsend.

“I was very happy he came back,” Baker said. “It took the pressure off me writing the reports.”

The situation at the Prosser station has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, WSU was preparing to place a weed scientist at the Prosser station. Those plans now have been put on hold.

Shane Johnson, executive director of the Washington Mint Commission, said he has been notified by WSU administration that the search for a new weed scientist has been suspended. “I was notified that more information will be given as soon as the chair of the finding committee gets more clarity on when and how we will move forward,” Johnson said in an email response to the MIRC.

“I wish I had more to share,” Johnson said.

In the meantime, Baker continues to do what he has done for most of the past 30 years, work on weed control in mint.

Baker said he has four projects going to date, including work on a multi-state project looking at Zidua herbicide in combination with Sharpen at different rates; research into tiafenacil herbicide in seven different combinations with registered herbicides; and a project with WSU entomologist Doug Walsh and irrigation specialist Troy Peters analyzing crop reactions to different water and fertilizer rates.

He plans to compile reports on the research beginning in the fall.



Ray Baker

AdvanceMint Helps Farm Reduce Irrigation

Scott Setniker of Setniker Farms in Independence, Oregon, has been using a cloud-based telemetry system for his farm's irrigation system for a half-dozen years. The past two years, thanks in large part to an AdvanceMint grant, the farm has added elements that have helped it cut water usage and save on energy.

In 2018, an AdvanceMint grant helped the farm pay for several soil moisture monitors that it has placed strategically in its mint production fields. Then, in 2019, a second grant helped the farm add to its number of soil moisture monitors and put in a weather station. The additions helped the farm forego as many as two irrigation applications per season over the past two years.

"Being able to see the real-time data gave me the confidence to hold back," Setniker said.



Scott Setniker (center) of Setniker Farms, Independence, Oregon speaking to attendees of the 2020 MIRC Annual Meeting in Arizona.

Setniker said the AdvanceMint awards from Mars Wrigley were a big reason why he invested in the additions.

"I probably wouldn't have put in the probes and the weather station without

the grant funds," he said. "I probably would have put my money somewhere else."

Setniker said he applied for the awards because he was wary of applying too

More than \$400,000 Awarded in AdvanceMint Grants

In its first three years, the Mars Wrigley program AdvanceMint has awarded more than \$400,000 to encourage and promote sustainable mint farming and distillation practices.

The program, which is administered by the MIRC, is accepting applications for its next round of awards from September 1 through December 15 of this year. Individual awards are capped at \$25,000.

According to an information kit provided by Mars Wrigley, examples of farming practices that qualify for the awards include: distillation efficiency improvements; general water-use reduction; water irrigation efficiency improvements; cover crops; till vs. no-till; water conservation plans; natural

gas-line installation; liquid propane vs. diesel fuel; improved soil testing and pesticide- and fertilizer-management plans.

As part of the eligibility requirements, award recipients agree to report on impacts on farming practices within one year after the practice has been implemented.

Successful applicants must agree to submit information on their farm and farming practices to FieldRise, a national program that measures farm stewardship across commodities, during the next assessment period.

Among other criteria, a team of four judges will evaluate applications based on the proposed project's



environmental, social or economic impact; ability of the practice to be adopted; and whether the entry provides sound methods for achieving tangible results.

Only farms located in the U.S. and Canada are eligible for the awards.

For more information on applying for the awards, contact the MIRC or Jeremy Schifeling at Jeremy.schifeling@effem.com.

much irrigation to his fields, but at the same time, was hesitant to hold back for fear of stressing his peppermint.

“I wanted to figure out if we can better monitor my pivots and my linears to make sure we aren’t overapplying water,” Setniker said. “We have some tight soils, and if you get too much water on there, it starts running off.”

The probes and the weather station today give him the confidence to hold back on that extra application, he said.

“It gives you real-time data on what is happening in the soil,” he said. “And if you can get more or just as much yield and use less water, it is a win-win.”

Utilizing the information provided by the soil monitors and weather station

involves interpreting a significant amount of data, Setniker said.

“You have a whole bunch of data and it is how you interpret the data that determines what decisions you make,” Setniker said.

The probes measure soil moisture down 12 inches, but Setniker said he typically bases his irrigation decisions on the top 8 inches of soil.

“The system I use is pretty basic,” he said. “The way I have them configured is I get a full or an empty gauge on my phone, so when I look at a particular field, if it has a moisture probe next to a linear, it will have a little gauge that tells me where my moisture is at.

“It is nice that you may not have to

drive all the way across the farm to check something,” Setniker added. “You can check the status remotely. And I can turn on my pumps and my pivots remotely, change speeds and change directions remotely.”

The system also has a messaging component that can be programmed to send a text message to Setniker’s phone when something is amiss. “You can program it to send a text message if a pivot stops or for all kinds of different things,” Setniker said. “You can program it so when the moisture levels hit a set point on a probe, it will text you.

“It is a good system,” Setniker said. “It has changed the way I irrigate.”

Long-Time Grower Representative Retiring from MIRC Board

It is no secret that one of the great strengths of the MIRC is a vertical integration that helps ensure the Council represents all facets of the mint industry.

For the grower community, there has been no greater representative over the years than Dennis Zeloski.

Zeloski has represented Wisconsin growers on the Board since the organization’s formation more than 40 years ago. During his four decades, he has seen the number of mint producers in the Midwest shrink while watching mint uses expand from traditional uses like chewing gum and toothpaste into a burgeoning essential oil industry.

Zeloski said he stuck with the MIRC primarily because of his belief that research supported by the MIRC provides growers an invaluable service.

“I was always interested in the research,” Zeloski said, “and the growers recognized that. Even though I quit

growing mint in 2003, the growers wanted to keep me on the Board because I had been following the research through the years and I had that continuity.”

Zeloski has received multiple awards over the years, including the Potato Association of America’s Grower of the Year award; an honorarium from the University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture, which is the college’s highest honor; and an induction into the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Hall of Fame.

You can add one more: In January, the MIRC presented Zeloski an Industry Appreciation Award.

The award, he said, ranks up with the best of any he’s received. “It is nice to be recognized for what you’ve done,” he said. “I’m honored.”



MIRC Chairman Dana Wendel presents Dennis Zeloski an Industry Appreciation Award at the 2020 Annual Meeting.

Morris Retiring from MIRC, ADM

By the time Mark Morris entered the mint industry, he was already well versed in the crop, having studied mint while pursuing his Ph.D. in entomology and plant pathology at Oregon State University.

After a two-year stint developing pesticide labels for Rhone Poulenc, he came back to mint and has stuck with the crop ever since. He's also been with the same company over the past 31 years.

"I went to work for the AM Todd Company on April 1, 1989, and I've worked for that organization ever since," he said. "We've had acquisitions, but I've been with that organization ever since."

Morris, currently director of plant sciences for ADM, also has been on the MIRC's Integrated Pest Management Committee for nearly all of his professional career. He, in fact, established the IPM Committee in 1989 and has served as chairman of it for all but two of the last 31 years.

Morris announced recently he is retiring from ADM and leaving the MIRC.

"The exact date will be sometime this year," Morris said in an interview earlier this year. "I have a target date in mind, but we haven't officially come to that yet."

Over the years, from his position as chair of the IPM Committee, Morris has provided the U.S. mint industry

several important functions. He helped steer the industry through the 1988 overhaul in the Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, a process that threatened the use of several pesticides growers rely on in mint production. "We lost very few materials during that overhaul," Morris said. He also has helped the industry obtain more than 15 additional pesticide labels since then.

Morris said he has stuck with the MIRC primarily because of the benefits it brings to growers in keeping pesticides labeled for use. "At the very least, the MIRC is invaluable in protecting our current pesticide labels and in pursuing new ones as needed," he said. "It also is critical in identifying research needs for the industry and in moving forward on addressing those needs."

Looking back, Morris described his career as "extremely rewarding and very enjoyable."

"I've enjoyed working with all the people, that includes our customers, farmers and even battling with our competitors."

"It has largely been a positive experience," he said.



Mark Morris holds his Industry Appreciation Award presented by the MIRC.

Chairman's Report

Dana Wendel, Chairman of the Board

MIRC Not Immune to COVID Impacts

COVERID-19 has affected all of us in many ways and the MIRC as an organization has not been immune to the impacts.

To that regard, in a move designed to protect the safety and overall health of our members, we have decided to cancel the Scientific Affairs Committee (SAC) meeting that was scheduled for September in Nashville, Tennessee.

This was a tough decision and we are disappointed not to be able to move forward with the meeting, but due to travel restrictions facing many of our members and concerns over health, it just seemed the right thing to do.

The annual SAC meeting in September and the annual meeting held each January are important functions to bring together members of our very diverse organization and keep our industry working together, talking and communicating from the grower level to the manufacturer level and everything in between.

Again, this is not what we wanted to do. It's what we felt we must do.

That said, the SAC meeting will go virtual, in the Zoom format that many of you know all too well; another "gift"

of managing our way through the current COVID situation.

Along those same lines, I am disappointed that I won't be accompanying Bryan Ostlund and Steve Salisbury, our administrator and our research and regulator coordinator, respectively, on their annual trip to Washington, D.C., and to visit our members back East. That is a tradition for the chairman that I was hoping to be a part of this year. That trip has also been cancelled, but I sincerely hope that we're back on track in 2021.

In lieu of that, we want to reach out and mention that we value the support of all of our members and wish we could do more in-person visits. The work we are able to accomplish would not be possible without the tremendous support we receive from all of you and we want to let you all know we appreciate it.

Also, with regard to COVID-19, we recently had a virtual meeting with some of the researchers working on MIRC-funded projects. In that meeting, we learned that much of the research is moving along just fine, but there have been some challenges for researchers in accessing their labs and confronting

a general hindrance in being able to move projects forward.

The university situation is compounded by reductions in state budgets, with states needing to redirect general funds to COVID response efforts. This has put even more strain on general state funds that would normally go to support the university systems.

There will very likely be a few areas that we'll need to address, but it would be unrealistic to think we could come through 2020 without a bump or two.

Please know we are monitoring everything carefully and helping where we can. As we move into our mid-year reports, however, we want you to be aware that there will likely be some work that won't be completed this year that we had hoped would be.

On a positive note, we're fortunate to have a great and professional team looking out for our interests. Steve, Bryan and Shawn handle it all in stride, check in with the executive committee when needed and generally keep it all running smoothly. As chairman, that's appreciated, especially in 2020.

As a closing comment, I wish the best of health to all of you and hope to see you all sooner rather than later.



Dana Wendel

MIRC is now on Twitter

Follow us @MIRCtoday



Research & Regulatory Update

Steve Salisbury

First, I hope everyone and your families are safe and healthy amid this global pandemic that we are all living with. It is certainly a difficult and challenging time for everyone and on all fronts of life. I look forward to life returning to a more normal situation, even if that normal comes with a few changes.

So, it is appropriate to provide an update on the MIRC research activities given expected impacts on them from the pandemic. We have been staying in contact with our 2020 researchers to stay abreast with progress. Overall, most of our research activities are showing some progress, but there are some delays being reported, too.

At the onset of the situation, most all projects were immediately brought to a stop as university administrators needed time to sort out the safety of their faculty and facilities. And, at first report, MIRC researchers were communicating to us that projects were on hold until further notice. Several universities declared that research that is not associated with a graduate student program and/or on-going research were deemed non-essential and were to cease immediately. At the same time, many of our researchers were not allowed to come to campus, labs, etc. leaving no way to work on MIRC projects. Restrictions did ease a bit allowing faculty to maintain plants in greenhouses.

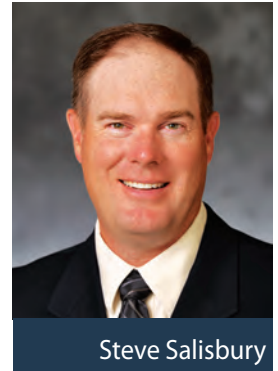
The MIRC varietal improvement project is slowly resuming at Washington State University as the Lange lab is able to restart activities, but at a reduced staff and several restrictions. If social restrictions continue to relax, Dr. Lange feels that

his lab will be able to complete their portion of the 2020 proposed research objectives. As of early June, the situation has not eased at Oregon State University where Dr. Vining is still restricted from her lab and is only allowed to maintain the mint plants in the greenhouse. She is hopeful that sometime in June her lab will be able to resume activities with many restrictions. At this time, she had no report on whether or not her lab could complete their 2020 research objectives. *(Update: We received word June 19 that Vining now has access to her lab.)*

Dr. Dung, at the OSU experiment station in Madras, is also experiencing delays due to lockdown and limited activities in the greenhouse. However, many of his mint projects were already started prior to the lockdown, which has allowed some leeway to continue the work under strict restrictions. Progress is slow but is happening which he feels will help them stay on track. He did report that the Boost Biomes project was delayed a bit because some of the treatment materials being tested could not be sourced from the supplier due to the shutdown. However, the product was eventually made available and the study can begin.

Also, on the *Verticillium* front, Dr. Trippe at USDA-ARS in Corvallis has reported that her research on wood vinegar has continued to progress. Her lab is working within many restrictions, but they are making good progress. The only delay has been connecting in-person with Dr. Dung to work out the protocols on testing infected plants. They are communicating remotely and hope to be able to accomplish this without an in-person meeting.

Our nematode research remains on track as Dr. Hafez in Idaho continues his work with the restrictions imposed on his staff. He feels that they will be able to meet all of the proposed objectives on time.



Steve Salisbury

At the Washington State University Prosser station, it has been reported that the research there is also on track and operating under restrictions as well. Ray Baker is managing both the irrigation x nitrogen fertilizer project in spearmint as well as the herbicide weeds trials. Barring any setbacks, we expect these projects to meet their goals for 2020.

As for the multi-state weeds project, all of the trial sites in the West had been established and treatments were applied prior to the shutdown. There had been some early concern expressed as to how these trials will be evaluated, but that concern seems to have subsided as these scientists and staff are able to evaluate. The Midwest situation has been slightly different due to crop/herbicide timings and university shutdowns. In Wisconsin, the trials have been established and treatments were applied by Dr. Colquhoun and staff and progress is on track. On the contrary, Purdue did not allow Dr. Meyers to initiate the trial, nor was Michigan State University allowing Dr. Zandstra to establish the trial.

However, the Indiana trial and a trial in Michigan were established thanks to a

couple of our mint growers stepping up and getting them done. Doug Irrer, St. Johns, Michigan, and Gerrett Dobson, Rensselaer, Indiana felt that these herbicide trials were too critical to miss a year, even if it was during a pandemic. These guys were able to establish the trials and apply the treatments at the appropriate timing. Evaluation and data collection are being arranged, and perhaps both university weed scientists will be able to take over when university restrictions relax. A big “Thank you” to Doug and Gerrett for their willingness and efforts.

Lastly, we are happy to report that Dr. Raudenbush’s research is not experiencing any setbacks. Wheeling University deemed the physical therapy department activities as essential service and the study is continuing as planned.

One other item in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, the MIRC has submitted public comment to the USDA requesting the addition of peppermint and spearmint to the USDA’s Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) list of eligible crops. At first pass, the program includes several specialty crops, but did not include mint. The program’s purpose is to provide financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered price declines and additional marketing costs due to market supply chain disruptions due to COVID-19.

With the help of our dealer/buyer members, we were able to demonstrate a greater than the five-percent market price decline criteria during the time period outlined by the USDA. Mint fits the criteria for the program

and we hope that both peppermint and spearmint will be added to the eligible crops list. “Thank you” to our dealer members for providing market information and supporting the growers.

For more information on CFAP and on applying for assistance if peppermint and spearmint are added, go to <https://www.farmers.gov/cfap>.

Again, several “Thank yous” to Doug and Gerrett for their efforts on the Midwest herbicide trials, and to many of our dealer members for supporting the growers on the USDA-CFAP request. Everyone’s interests, concerns, willingness, phone calls and emails are appreciated and a healthy sign that our industry is passionate about what we do in mint from the farms to the final products.



Mint Industry Research Council

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Call 800-566-2524

Reference the MIRC Annual Meeting
by December 18, 2020 to receive the group rate.

SAVE THE DATE



Mint Industry Research Council

P.O. Box 4059, Salem, OR 97302

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