



# Strategic Alliance

## Document

An agreement between the National Plant Board (NPB), Board of Directors (BOD) and the Plant Protection and Quarantine Management Team (PPQMT)

October 2014

**Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ)** safeguards U.S. agriculture and natural resources against the entry, establishment, and spread of economically and environmentally significant pests, and facilitates the safe international trade of agricultural products. PPQ's commitment is to ensure healthy plants and safe trade for a strong and prosperous America.

The **National Plant Board (NPB)** NPB seeks to provide national representation for each of the regional plant boards; receive, foster effective and harmonized plant health programs; act as an information clearinghouse on plant pest prevention and regulatory matters; provide for a discussion of principles, policies and methods; and promote efficiency, harmony and uniformity in and among the states in the field of plant pest prevention and regulation.

Together, **PPQ and the NPB** agree to work together to utilize our respective federal and state authorities, assets, and expertise to safeguard plant health and enable safe trade.

Signed:

Osama El-Lissy  
PPQ Deputy Administrator

Geir Friisoe  
President, National Plant Board

## **Introduction**

In June 2014, leadership from the NPB and PPQ came together to discuss the longstanding partnership between the two organizations and discuss shared priorities for which a collaborative effort could bring forth effective solutions. Through the discussion, we recognized that our partnership is, in fact, a strategic alliance that encompasses varying levels of engagement from simple networking or sharing of information, to coordination where activities were complementary but not necessarily carried out together to full collaboration in which the interests of plant health safeguarding are best served when we work side by side and fully integrate our efforts.

One example cited of a successful collaboration reflecting the effectiveness of the strategic alliance was the soybean rust initiative. A successful non-regulatory response to the imminent approach of soybean rust was developed through frequent communication among PPQ, NPB, other federal and state agencies, growers, industry organizations, and the research community. Through these communications, a plan was developed and vetted in which the roles of all parties were clearly articulated. The planned response was rehearsed and tested and all parties effectively fulfilled their roles without disruption to production or commerce when soybean rust arrived in the United States.

As a result of these discussions, the PPQ Management Team and the NPB Board of Directors decided to document the strategic alliance for the benefit of both organizations now and in the future. The agreements outlined in this document are between the NPB BOD and the PPQ MT and reflect the relationship at an organizational level, not the individual state level.

## **Shared Purpose**

PPQ and NPB will work together to utilize federal and state authorities, assets, and expertise to safeguard plant health and enable safe trade.

## **The Importance of the Alliance:**

This alliance between PPQ and the NPB is important because neither PPQ nor the states alone have the authorities, assets and expertise to safeguard plant health and enable safe trade. The states need PPQ for:

- International trade agreements
- Issuance of the federal export certificate based on state needs and inspections
- Obtaining the national perspective/input of industries and other national organizations
- Technical and scientific expertise
- Funding

- Emergency response
- Creating the national framework for interstate and international issues/commerce
- Import and interstate movement permits for federally regulated products

Likewise, PPQ needs the states for:

- Local knowledge and local relationships with industry, agriculture, other units of state and local government
- Consensus building among the states
- Perspective across the states/regions
- Authority to regulate within a state
- Rapid mobilization for pest response
- Efficiencies of operation often associated with local operations

## **Nature of the Relationship**

The NPB and PPQ have a strong working relationship characterized by:

- A desire for a true alliance/partnership in which the organizations work side-by-side and engage early on issues of mutual importance
- A consultative relationship, as reflected in cooperative agreements
- Consensus discussions
- Common goals between PPQ and the NPB on issues with national and international impact
- A willingness to use each other's strengths
- Advocacy from affected stakeholders

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

We recognize that our respective authorities and capacities will result in varying levels of interdependence on different plant health issues. We understand that through discussion and engagement we will build a better understanding of the needs and issues that exist locally and identify the national context and political landscape in which those needs and issues might be addressed. We also recognize that we can work together at three different levels—at the individual state level, regionally, and nationally. Each level on which we work and each issue we face may require a different approach and it is important that we be clear about the level of integration on each issue or project to determine the appropriate role for each organization. In addition, we will consider the level of participation and understanding needed by all other parties including the public industry, tribes, and other stakeholders such as non-profit organizations.

We will not always agree, but we will strive to understand, accept, and articulate our differences clearly and constructively. When we cannot reach agreement, we can still be

united and clear in communicating our differing perspectives and what each of us can or will do in our respective roles.

## **Decision Making and Planning**

We agree that effective decision making involves several steps and should have a mechanism for each party to address concerns about any aspect of the decision making process. A robust decision model includes:

- Identify the trigger—what is precipitating the need for a decision?
- Identify the specific issue that needs to be addressed—what is the need for action and the scope of the issue, who can act, who are the stakeholders?
- Analyze the issue—what are the objectives, what options are available, what do stakeholders think?
- Make the decision—choose an option and develop a communication plan
- Implement the decision—identify barriers to success, performance metrics, a compliance monitoring plan, and roles and responsibilities
- Monitor and review outcomes--were the objectives met, was the solution responsive to needs/concerns, what were the intended and unintended impacts, was the desired level of compliance achieved, is there new or changing information that would trigger a new process?

Within the context of a decision model, we agree on the following fundamentals:

- It is important to have the right people involved from both parties early in the process of making decisions that affect both PPQ and the States. There will be regular outreach with each other, including a regular time to meet, so that each can alert the other of upcoming decisions and planning. Outreach includes:
  - Information sharing
  - Stakeholder meetings
  - Consultations
  - Communication regarding pending issues including upcoming decisions about budget, policy and programs
- Everyone cannot be part of every decision that each organization makes. Every effort will be made to include each other in the discussions leading up to decisions that have an impact on both PPQ and the States.
- After decisions are made, they will be communicated in PPQ and the States appropriately.
- Once decisions are made and communicated, the PPQMT and the NPB will make every effort to see that the decisions are carried out while recognizing the limits that the NPB may have in influencing state members.

- When either party has concerns about any part of the process, the issue will be brought up for discussion between the NPB and PPQ. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue and prevent similar issues in the future.
- When agreement cannot be reached and either the NPB or PPQ believes an issue needs to be elevated, there should be no surprises and each party should have the opportunity to make their respective leadership chains aware (NASDA and USDA)

## **Communication/Information Sharing**

Effective and proactive communication is essential to the success of the strategic alliance. We agree that optimal communication is:

- specific and proactive;
- clear in articulating expectations, realities, and, limitations;
- ensures sharing of appropriate information early and regularly;
- engages one another in dialog when agreed upon circumstances or factors indicate the need for discussion;
- follows agreed upon protocols in each organization and across organizations;
- unified in messaging to each organization about agreements, decisions, and areas where agreement cannot be reached.

To sustain optimal communication, we believe that:

- there is an ongoing need to provide orientation to NPB and PPQ staff to ensure the importance of the alliance is understood;
- we will sometimes need to develop a broader understanding of decisions and agreements within each organization;
- there will sometimes be a need to elevate issues appropriately and transparently.

## **Evaluation and Metrics**

We agree to assess this alliance at least annually and use that opportunity to identify strategic priorities we can address together and assess progress on strategic priorities identified in the previous cycle. The NPB BOD and the PPQ MT will conduct the annual assessment based on the metrics built into work plans around each strategic priority and will end projects that are either finished or no longer relevant.

Even though we will review the alliance annually, it is important to keep the lines of communication open through other means and continually address issues and grievances with each other as soon as possible after they arise.

## Alliance Work Plan:

As part of the June 2014 meeting, we assessed a slate of proposed priorities developed by the NPB and PPQ and came to agreement on the top three strategic priorities to pursue over the next year. Although we agreed to pursue only the top 3, we also felt that PPQ's Professional Development Center will work with designees from the NPB to identify training opportunities available to NPB members.

### 2014 Ranking of the projects:

Project	Votes	Weighted Score
Enforcement	14	32
Funding	14	31
Deregulation	12	26
Training	10	14
Export	3	4
Accreditation	1	1

## Enforcement and Compliance (Dana Rhodes and Paula Henstridge, Champions)

### Goal:

- Gain better compliance with regulatory requirements in federal-state programs and build an understanding with one another and awareness among industry of our respective roles in achieving compliance and safeguarding goals.
- Evaluate Federal and state authorities to determine how they can be effectively coordinated and leveraged to develop a progressive compliance and enforcement approach.
- Develop robust, timely, effective enforcement actions at both the state and the federal level

### Context:

- Compliance is the preferred outcome and is more efficient where it can be achieved.
- Resources to achieve compliance are constrained at both the federal and state levels.
- Federal and state officials need to evaluate carefully whether compliance agreements should be entered into if we don't believe the entity can comply.

### What PPQ is doing or will do:

- PPQ has working groups established to strengthen the compliance and enforcement efforts in PPQ.

- PPQ will engage the NPB when a compliance and enforcement working group is focused on goals and objectives that affect the states.

**What NPB/the States are doing or will do:**

- Use States authorities to suspend or revoke licenses, suspend compliance agreements, stop sales, order treatments, etc. to help achieve compliance, awareness, and understanding of the federal-state systems.
- State resources, expertise, and documentation are available for IES to use in investigations.

**What the NPB and PPQ will do jointly:**

- Pursue IES training and ensure SPHDs and SPROs take the training together whenever possible.
- Establish a work group to Identify federal and state tools and how they can be coordinated to create an effective federal-state compliance and enforcement effort.
- The work group may include: Paul Chaloux, Paula Henstridge, Gwen Servies, Geir Friisoe, Dana Rhodes, and 2 other NPB members, and IES. The group will determine its own leadership and coordination needs. Geir Friisoe and Paula Henstridge to coordinate initial launch.
- The timeline for the work group to complete its work is 12-18 months.

**Level of Integration:** Coordination

**Accountability and Metrics:**

- A training program for states and federal employees is established
- Progressive compliance packets are developed for state use
- Progressive compliance guidance is developed to support effective use of identified tools
- The group will use existing twice-monthly calls to update the NPB Executive Committee and the PPQMT. Updates will be quarterly.

**Results Needed:** Greater compliance and greater awareness of the importance of compliance.

**Funding**

**(Brad White and Alan Dowdy, Champions)**

**Goal:**

- Develop clear and transparent timelines from the time funds get appropriated to the time funds are obligated to the states and determine whether adjustments can be made to ensure continual cash flow.
- NPB would like to be a part of the budget planning
- Further streamlining of the agreements process with an overarching agreement and work plans that can be easily refined and reused for ongoing work.

- Identify and address bottlenecks in cooperative agreement workflow.

**Context:**

- Funding is a broad and complex issue. Over time, the discussion should also encompass CAPS and Farm Bill funding
- Lack of clarity around whether or not states can pre-spend funds for projects before agreements are signed. States seem to differ on this.
- Biology makes a difference in the timing of pest surveys. Regional climate differences are also important to consider. Can cooperative agreements be constructed around these needs?
- States can have difficulty meeting payroll after making significant investments in employees. There is a cycle of hiring and lay-offs that need to be mitigated to minimize costs associated with rehiring and retraining.
- Different funding sources have different timeframes; some are multiyear or no-year; appropriations are generally single year.
- Continual updates to the work plans prolong approval. It seems there are many levels that ask for different revisions; it would be more efficient to have all the requested revisions compiled and submitted one time to the States. Also, PPQ staff seems to be using the process to learn about the project. Communication with PPQ staff on these questions is not direct. Can the learning process and the approval/management processes be separated?
- States don't have the staff to deal with quick turnarounds for revisions and audits.
- Budget updates on twice-monthly call are helpful to the NPB.

**Results Needed:**

- Move funding more efficiently, getting funds obligated to states on a smooth timeline once appropriations are passed and align fiscal timelines between state and federal levels.
- Provide clarity around status of funding whenever possible.

**What PPQ is doing or will do:** Develop a timeline for the federal fiscal year and try to build compliance agreements that better align with state fiscal years and/or agreement needs (e.g., March to March or April to April) to cover the overlap of cropping systems and fiscal years.

**What the NPB/States are doing or will do:** Develop a timeline for states and check in with representatives on the Cooperative Agreements Management Working Group to see where they are and what is planned.

**What the NPB and PPQ will do jointly:** Establish a Funding Project Work Group, championed by Alan Dowdy and Brad White, to include, in addition to Alan Dowdy and Brad White, Ginger Murphy, Osama El-Lissy, Larry Nichols, Carrie Larson, and Aurelio Posadas. Brian Kuhn and Richard Miranda may serve as subject matter experts. Aurelio needs to give his feedback to the group working on the cooperative agreement BPI.

Work Group: Alan Dowdy and Brad White will coordinate with the Cooperative Agreements Working Group to identify linkages and leverage expertise in developing timelines representing federal and state fiscal cycles and program cycles. They will work with others in the NPB and add PPQ as needed to develop a final course of action.

**Level of integration:** Coordination

**Accountability and Metrics:**

- Identified states/federal budget timetable and processes; consider the process and timing for cooperative agreements.
- Cash flow process developed that provides more seamless funding for cooperative programs.
- Staggered cooperative agreements to reflect regional/climatic/biological needs of agreement work.
- Quick fixes established to provide funds earlier in the process for certain programs.

**Evaluate Deregulation and the Process to Close Programs  
(Mitch Yergert and Mike Watson, Champions)**

**Goal:**

Develop an objective, science-driven evaluation process to strengthen current programs. This will be achieved by providing a strong basis for continuing regulatory efforts and phasing out activities that are not cost beneficial or otherwise supported by science nor shared policies.

**Context:**

The National Plant Board and APHIS PPQ have cooperated for decades on many eradication, survey and management efforts. The targets have normally been recent alien invasive species. The most common method of regulation is through establishment of a quarantine. In some cases, the programs have been very successful and short lived (e.g., fruit flies, European grapevine moth). In other cases, success has been achieved only after many decades of efforts (e.g., boll weevil, pink bollworm). Nonetheless, all programs would be strengthened by a periodic review of the scientific underpinnings and other public policy factors influencing the program, performance measures and cost/benefit considerations. Recent experiences suggest that some legacy programs may have very limited basis or justification for continuation based on less than successful impact of regulatory efforts. The context of limited resources and the need to deal with new, incoming threats suggests that the NPB and PPQ alliance should seek optimization and maximization of existing shared resources.

**Results Needed:**

Establish a team to coordinate efforts to affirm, strengthen, modify, or end regulatory efforts with an emphasis on identifying program review targets using biological, economic, and other public policy criteria. The team would develop a consistent, transparent process that would provide cooperating states and PPQ a basis to evaluate existing and new regulatory programs. The following products are envisioned:

1. Comprehensive inventory of existing cooperative regulatory programs
2. Adoption of an evaluation process
3. Priority setting
4. Development of program evaluation reports
5. Communication of reports to appropriate stakeholders for implementation

**What PPQ is going to do:**

PPQ will provide program costs and develop spreadsheets that standardize metrics for program evaluation.

PPQ will work with cooperating states to expand the assessment of program costs to adequately represent state investments.

PPQ will designate work group members.

PPQ will provide quantitative analysts, economists and program managers to assemble required data and conduct analyses. Analysts should focus not only on assessments, but on evaluation of different options. In general, it should not be simply a choice between full eradication and nothing.

**What NPB/States will do.**

NPB/States will provide comprehensive assessment of program costs, not limited to Farm Bill funding.

NPB/States will designate work group members.

NPB/States will designate evaluation reviewers

**What the NPB and PPQ will do jointly.**

NPB/States and PPQ will discuss results and review evaluations. Determine whether this is a new initiative in addition to or replacing the Ongoing Pest Advisory Group (OPAG). If it differs from OPAG, coordinate with OPAG and any other relevant activities.

NPB/States and PPQ will coordinate communication and implementation of results.

NPB/States and PPQ will discuss resource implications when programs are phased out.

The leadership team recognized that no one program exists in a vacuum and that in some cases the loss of funds may lead to unnecessary program extensions. The fact that new threats are often ignored due to the costs of legacy programs suggests that a simple phasing out may not be appropriate in most cases and that the NPB/States and PPQ need to engage in a vigorous discussion as to how to best address priority pests.

NPB and PPQ will jointly consult and keep industry in the communication loop and recognize that many factors must enter into public policy decisions and affect the response to those decisions. Although grounded in knowledge of available science, these factors can also include things such as economics, social acceptance.

#### **Work Group:**

Two workgroups consisting of PPQ and State analysts will be established and will be responsible to develop milestones, timelines and proposals if needed. Each workgroup will consist of 6 members: 3 representing PPQ and 3 representing the NPB. One workgroup will develop a list of federally regulated pests that could be candidates for deregulation. This list will be developed with input from PPQ and NPB/State representatives with a rationale for including a pest for deregulation or developing a stronger program. The second workgroup will develop a template to include triggers that would support a deregulation process. These workgroups will be established by October 31, 2014.

#### **Level of Integration:**

Different levels of integration are needed given that programs are often implemented by States and coordinated by PPQ. Overall, it is a partnership.

#### **Accountability and Metrics**

The team proposes that the current evaluations of Giant African Land Snails (GALS) in Florida and Pine Shoot Beetle (PSB) nationally could be used to determine whether standard metrics could be adopted based on that pilot exercise. PSB has been found to be a pest of stressed pine trees in the east, but there is concern in the northwest and southeast regarding how this pest would impact these pine resources. For example, the GALS program is subject to a bi-annual scientific update and program review by a team of experts and refinements and changes to program as well as comprehensive reassessments (exit strategies) are all part of the process. Importantly, every six months questions are raised as to where efficiencies to be gained. Also, a key aspect with the GALS Eradication Program is that the biannual reviews are very

focused lasting only one day with essential program elements targeted-for discussion. Performance in the GALS Eradication Program is related to whether goal is of eradication is being achieved or not.

## **Training**

**(Geir Friisoe and Alan Dowdy, Champions)**

The training priority will be worked on directly between the National Plant Board and the Professional Development Center (PDC). Steps to be taken:

- Alan Dowdy to ask PDC to send the list of available training programs to Geir Friisoe and to identify PDC staff to work with the NPB.
- Geir will share the list with the NPB members.
- Geir will identify NPB people to meet with the PDC to discuss the list.

Notes:

- The method of delivery needs to be convenient for all participants to take the training (web-based).
- States have difficulty accessing AgLearn; specifically need to think about where to house the ACO training.
- Need to know the length of training offerings.