October 30, 2012

SANC and NCPN – Parallel Tracks

An early and robust example of a systems approach to nursery certification was the development of programs to prevent viruses and other graft-transmissible agents from being spread in nursery stock of perennial crop plants. Washington State developed such a program for temperate fruit trees in the 1950s, and similar programs have proliferated in other states since — in fruit trees, grapevines, berries and other crops. While these state-level programs are diverse, all are based on a few key principles:

- Viruses cost nurseries and fruit growers money. These pathogens cannot be easily detected visually, and plants cannot be cured once they are infected.
- A system that incorporates use of clean stock, clean growing sites, and clean methods of production can minimize the impact of viruses on nursery and grower industries.
- The nursery industries and states both gain from a partnership in this area — building markets while minimizing the spread of damaging pests.

The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN), established by the US Secretary of Agriculture as directed in the 2008 Farm Bill, is a program under which a partnership of clean plant centers is organized for diagnostic and pathogen elimination services to produce clean propagative plant material. Currently, the NCPN includes clean plant centers for berries, citrus, grapes, hops and temperate fruit trees. Recognizing that clean plants need protected from pests after leaving the centers but still in the production and distribution system, the NCPN has developed working groups to explore improvements in the certification systems that move those clean plants from the centers into the hands of growers. In October, for the first time, a group gathered to consider harmonization of virus-tested certification programs across all commodity groups. More information about certification and the harmonization meeting will be posted at http://nationalcleanplantnetwork.org/.

Healthy Plants! Good Business!

http://sanc.nationalplantboard.org