

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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New Tool Helps You Identify Pest Risks

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The Horticultural Research Institute (HRI), the research arm of AmericanHort, in partnership with the National Plant Board and the USDA, announced the launch of a new web-based tool for nursery and greenhouse growers seeking to improve plant production processes by identifying areas where plants could be contaminated or introduced to plant pests.

The 2014 Farm Bill included funding specifically for what was then a brand-new program designed to help plant producers minimize risks at the beginning of production to avoid headaches at the end. Called Systems Approach to Nursery Certification (SANC), it's a voluntary, grower-driven, state-verified plant health certification partnership that applies quality management principles to the entire plant production process. SANC was developed as a holistic approach to growing and certifying plants that satisfies applicable state and federal plant health regulations.

To ensure that plants moving in the horticultural trade are free of regulated invasive pests that threaten agriculture and the environment, greenhouses and nurseries are regulated by state and federal authorities. SANC applies best practices at key points in the plant production process to address identified risks. These practices are integrated into a growing operation system, hence "systems approach" in the name.

McKay Nursery (Wisconsin), Star Roses and Plants (Pennsylvania), and Dickman Farms (New York) were some of the first growing operations to ship plants under the SANC certification. During the last few years, more growers and nurseries have adopted the program for their production.

To make the process easier, HRI, the National Plant Board and USDA developed a new web-based risk assessment tool. Although it was designed to help growers more easily perform the risk assessment required to participate in SANC, the tool is available, at no cost, to any nursery or greenhouse seeking to improve their processes, whether they choose to pursue SANC certification or not.

Growers may request free user access to begin a facility risk assessment by visiting the Risk Assessment website at hiresearch-sanc.org. You can also learn more about this new tool in a webinar that was hosted by Craig Regelbrugge, AmericanHort's executive vice president of advocacy, research & industry relations. You can find the archived webinar at hiresearch.org/thrive-web-series. **GT**