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ANLA applauds \$45 million in USDA funding for plant health safeguarding

WASHINGTON — The American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA) applauds the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for recently allocating \$45 million, provided by

Section 10201 of the 2008 Farm Bill, for projects in support of critical plant health safeguarding initiatives across America. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the funding in late January.



ANLA's Craig Regelbrugge fought hard for the funding.

Funding will be provided to more than 50 cooperators, including state

departments of agriculture, universities, non-profit organizations and USDA agencies in support of more than 200 projects. As Vilsack indicated, these state, regional and national projects will support the Farm Bill goals of building strong systems to safeguard the health of U.S. agricultural industries using early plant pest detection and surveillance, threat identification and mitigation. Roughly \$2 million of the funds are earmarked for projects specifically designed to safeguard nursery production.

"A number of the target projects are relevant to the Green Industry," said Craig Regelbrugge, ANLA vice president for government relations. "We are especially excited that several projects will seek to validate and measure effectiveness of best management practices and nursery systems approaches for pest management and nursery plant certification."

One such project is expected to be carried out in a partnership involving the Horticultural Research Institute (HRI) and a university cooperator. Other projects of interest to the industry are focused on detection or containment of serious plant pests that affect nursery production and commerce.

The Farm Bill Sec. 10201 plant safeguarding initiative was a key ANLA farm bill priority. Since the bill was passed, ANLA has chaired the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance's implementation team focused on guiding use of these important funds through a fair and transparent process overseen by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). In the coming weeks, APHIS will be working with the more than 50 cooperators, including HRI, who will receive funds as they develop formal work plans.

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The return of the trade show?

It's been a rough year for, well, almost everyone. Nearly every aspect of the Green Industry has felt the pressure from a down economy. But there might be some bright news on the horizon.

Recently The Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show (Mid-Am) announced a 2.3% gain in buyer registrations at the 2010 trade show, held Jan. 20-22 at McCormick Place West in Chicago. Total registration was 7,931 with 5,972 buyers, 1,546 exhibitors and 413 others. There was a smaller show floor than in previous years with 303 companies exhibiting, but with more buyers, there is reason to hope.

Mid-Am isn't the only show with good news. Earlier in January, Landscape Ontario's Congress, Canada's largest international horticultural, lawn and garden trade show and conference boasted a 22% increase in attendance from the previous year.

With that in mind, perhaps it's time to start making plans to attend GIE+EXPO October 28-30 in Louisville, KY. Register online now for the industry's mega show by visiting www.gie-expo.com. Visit the site regularly for updates on events planned for the tradeshow as well as information on exhibitors. There you also can find links to hotels or you can call the Louisville Housing Bureau, (800) 743-3100 or (502) 561-3100 to book your lodging.

GIE+EXPO is ranked the 14th largest tradeshow in America, according to *Trade Show Executive* magazine. GIE+EXPO is sponsored by the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) and Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS).



Iron Mike goes green

Green Industry professionals got to meet "Iron Mike" Ditka — the only man on the planet to win Super Bowl rings as a player (Dallas Cowboys, Super Bowl VI), assistant coach (Cowboys, Super Bowl XII) and head coach (Chicago Bears, Super Bowl XX) — at the recent Golf Industry Show in February in San Diego. "Da Ditka" appearance came compliments of BASF — a Green Industry plant health champion.

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Leveraging 2009's lessons

We're over the shock of the seemingly unrelenting stream of bad news that dominated winter 2009. The daily reports of massive bank failures, record-breaking numbers of foreclosures and waves of job losses cast a smothering gray pall of uncertainty over almost everything. While our economy has a long way to go to recover what's been lost, we're confident the worst is behind us. We're now more certain of what to expect and what we must do as our 2010 season gets in full swing. That's the good news.

The bad news is that the strong rebound we had hoped for in our country's economic fortunes and a return to robust growth for our industry are still a ways off. This season will not be one of the better years for most of us. Even so, our industry is better positioned than most because we have firm control of our companies and the public appreciates our services. And now that spring is here we're blessedly busy.

We have sales calls to make, employees to train and clients requiring our services. We're in full hustle, with three goals topping our agendas:

1. Being as visible as possible within our markets;

2. Marketing and selling like we've never done before; and

3. Delivering the most personal and appreciated service possible.

Too busy to be discouraged about this season's prospects, we're guardedly optimistic about 2010 in spite of the general economy. We're convinced of the long-term success of our companies and a return to growth in the landscape industry, even if it is modest this year.

We remind ourselves that we have a lot going for us, which we would recognize if we reflect on it a little bit.

Small business, big opportunities

We should also remind ourselves we're an industry comprised of tens of thousands of businesses guided by an aggressive, entrepreneurial spirit.

Most of our operations are small, even by accepted definitions of small business. The advantages of being small sometimes outweigh the disadvantages — especially during periods of rapid change, such as we're experiencing. Small companies can react quickly to shifts in the market or to changes in customers' situations and needs.

Small also means not being hamstrung by unions or haunted by underfunded pension plans.

Going into last season many of us cut costs, increased our marketing and sales efforts or realigned our mix of services. Some of us did all three.

We're now applying the lessons we learned from last season, and we're more confident of our ability to gauge and fully capitalize on our companies' prospects.

As humorist Tom Bodett said, "In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson."

Every season brings its own lessons, many of them hard-earned. Granted, given the choice, we would rather not have another learning experience like last year.

We have a lot going for us, which we would recognize if we reflect on it a little bit.

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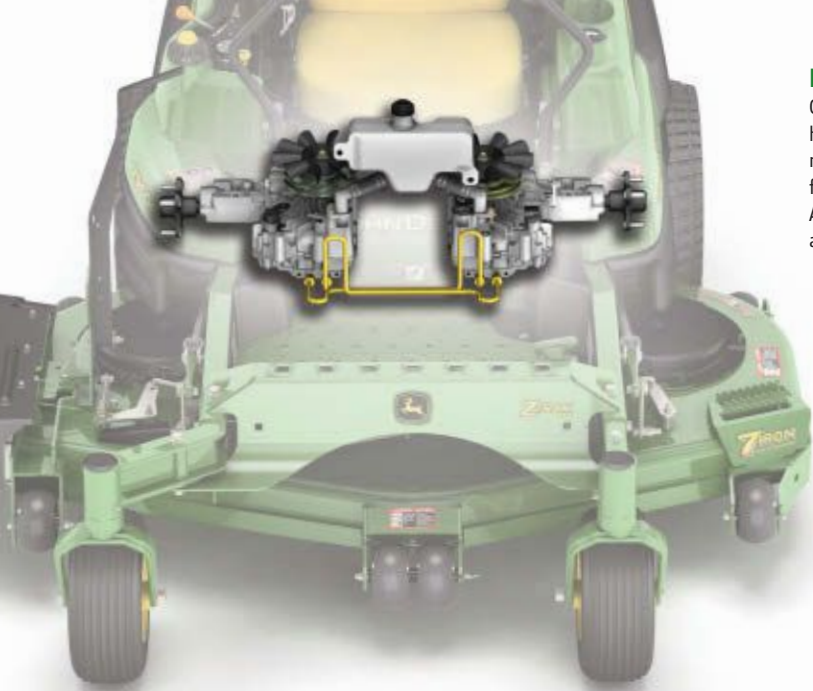
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