



# National Clean Plant Network - Fruit Trees Charter

A component of the National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)  
Revised April 20, 2017

The Mission of the National Clean Plant Network - Fruit Trees (NCPN-FT) is to assist in the production of high quality asexually propagated temperate climate fruit and nut trees free of targeted plant pathogens and pests that cause economic loss, to protect the environment and contribute to the global competitiveness of specialty crop producers.

This mission will be achieved through the following goals (see Appendix A):

1. NCPN-FT will provide rapid and safe introduction and release of selections from foreign and domestic sources (see Appendix B).
2. NCPN-FT will establish and maintain foundation mother blocks (G1) to provide clean planting stock to industry within prescribed state and federal certification schemes.
3. NCPN-FT will establish and coordinate working relationships with and among appropriate entities that certify plants for planting.
4. Provide a forum to discuss matters related to NCPN-FT operations and to the movement of clean plants for planting both domestically and internationally.

## Charter for the National Clean Plant Network - Fruit Trees:

1. The name of this organization shall be the *National Clean Plant Network - Fruit Trees* (NCPN-FT).
2. Definitions:
  - a. temperate climate fruit and nut trees shall refer to trees of the genera *Malus*, *Prunus*, *Pyrus*, *Cydonia* and *Chaenomeles* regardless of their use for food production or as ornamental plants.
  - b. viruses shall refer to viruses, graft-transmissible pathogens such as fastidious bacteria of the genus *Xylella* and phytoplasma, and other graft-transmissible agents that have not been identified.
  - c. The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) is the network of centers established in the *The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008* under the Secretary of Agriculture (USDA), further enhanced by the addition of other clean plant centers over time, and fortified in the 2014 Farm Bill.
3. The NCPN-FT operates under the umbrella of the NCPN.
4. The NCPN-FT is a specialty crop-based group to provide input to the NCPN in matters relating to the mission of this organization.
5. The NCPN-FT shall have a governing committee (referred to within the NCPN network as the Tier 2 specialty crop committee, or NCPN-FT Tier 2) that shall consist of:
  - a. the following voting members:

- i. six industry members (at least two of the six industry members on the Tier 2 will represent production nurseries and two will represent production growers.)
    - ii. three regulatory members (state employees)
- Note: The selection of the industry and regulatory members shall, in total, be selected to provide representation of diverse production areas.*
- iii. Up to four university representatives (at least one from research and one from extension)
  - b. the following non-voting members:
    - i. NCPN National Coordinator or any other representative appointed by NCPN Tier 1 governing body
    - ii. one National Clonal Germplasm Repository (NCGR) representative
    - iii. two USDA-APHIS-PPQ observers appointed by USDA-APHIS; one observer will represent USDA-APHIS-PPQ Policy Management
    - iv. a representative of the AmericanHort Association
    - v. subject matter experts invited to participate ad hoc by the Tier 2 voting members
  - c. The voting members shall be proposed by a selection committee (composed of one each of the university, industry and regulatory members of the Tier 2 committee). Additional nominations will be accepted from stakeholders. Selection of representatives to the Tier 2 will be by a poll of current NCPN-FT Tier 2 members plus stakeholders who have participated in at least one of the previous two general NCPN-FT meetings.
    - i. Criteria for voting members of the NCPN-FT Tier 2:
      - 1. Voting members must belong in good standing to the major constituent group that they represent (that is, industry, regulatory research or extension bodies)
      - 2. Voting members must represent their constituent group regardless of local or personal affiliations
  - d. The voting members shall select a chair and vice-chair from within the ranks of the voting members.
    - i. The terms of the chair and vice-chair are two years.
    - ii. There is no limit to the number of times that a committee member may serve as chair and/or vice-chair.
    - iii. The chair and vice-chair are allowed to vote on issues before the committee but must recuse themselves when there is an apparent conflict of interest.
  - e. The term of voting members shall be three years. The effective date of the terms to the NCPN-FT Tier 2 members shall be September 1.
    - i. Each year, one regulatory, one university and two industry member positions shall be available for re-election.
    - ii. There is no limit to the number of times that a committee member may serve.
    - iii. If two consecutive meetings have not been attended by a voting member, the chair will consult with the individual about their intent to continue participating and will report his/her findings to the committee, which can then potentially recommend a replacement.
  - f. A quorum consists of a simple majority of voting members with one representative each of industry, regulatory and university.

- g. Resolutions will pass by a simple majority vote of participating voting members.
- 6. Role of the NCPN-FT Tier:
  - a. Voting members of the Tier 2 will nominate individuals as observers to represent the NCPN-FT on the NCPN Tier 1 governing body.
  - b. Provide leadership and direction for the NCPN-FT.
  - c. Provide advice on policy to the NCPN.
  - d. Establish priorities for funding programs:
    - i. The NCPN-FT Tier 2 will request and receive budget proposals from centers and individuals to support the mandates of the NCPN-FT.
    - ii. The NCPN-FT specialty crop committee will review the proposals for funding, consolidate and forward the NCPN-FT's recommendations on proposals to the NCPN Tier 1 governing body for consideration.
    - iii. Any committee member who submits a proposal for funding from the NCPN shall be recused from discussions and review of proposals unless addressing specific questions from the committee.
  - e. Deliverable outcomes will be identified and reviewed on a regular basis.
  - f. Working groups will be established to formulate operating procedures of Tier 2, including biennial reviews of center performance and business plans.
  - g. NCPN-FT Tier 2 will, when needed, assign tasks to committee members relative to NCPN-FT operations or to the broader issues involving movement of clean plants for planting.
- 7. This charter and supporting documents will be available for public view.
- 8. The charter can be reviewed by the NCPN-FT Tier 2 at any time and changed with support of a super majority (60%) of the quorum present.
- 9. Headquarters of the NCPN-FT will be located at the Clean Plant Center Northwest (CPCNW) in Prosser, WA, with administrative support from NCPN.
- 10. The NCPN-FT Tier 2 will convene meetings at least two times a year.
- 11. NCPN-FT Tier 2 encourages stakeholder input, including participation at biennial general meetings, to be held at FT centers on a rotating basis.

## Appendix A:

Actions to achieve National Clean Plant Network - Fruit Trees (NCPN-FT) goals:

1. The NCPN-FT will provide rapid and safe introduction and release of selections from foreign and domestic sources.
  - a. The NCPN-FT will establish, maintain, and enhance a network of facilities and expertise for testing and providing therapy for clones of temperate climate fruit and nut trees based on climatic suitability, current infrastructure and expertise, regional needs, and disease and insect pest pressure.
    - i. Conduct a review of existing facilities to assess strengths and weaknesses.
    - ii. Review state and federal regulations regarding facilities operations to determine where modernization is needed.
    - iii. Validate and implement more rapid and improved testing and therapy protocols.
  - b. The NCPN-FT will use reliable, proven, available methods to release pathogen-tested planting material in a safe and timely fashion.
    - i. The NCPN-FT will agree on diagnostic protocols and diseases and insects being screened consistent with international plant exchange requirements and state certification standards.
    - ii. The NCPN-FT will encourage sharing positive controls.
    - iii. The NCPN-FT will use reasonable methods to obtain desired accessions from reliable sources both within and outside the network.
2. The NCPN-FT will establish and maintain foundation mother blocks (G1) to provide clean planting stock to industry within prescribed state and federal certification schemes.
  - a. The NCPN-FT will establish collections of cultivars that are tested and found to be free of targeted pathogens and insects in accordance with NCPN-FT standards.
    - i. Center standards will meet or exceed standards of certification requirements needed for practical distribution of collection material and will include site selection, site preparation, isolation distances, pest monitoring protocols, inspection and testing regimes, among other factors.
    - ii. Wherever possible, the NCPN-FT will strive to produce propagation material free of all detectable harmful pathogens for handling.
    - iii. The NCPN-FT centers will consult with stakeholders to prioritize what will be in a collection.
  - b. Centers for the NCPN-FT will establish diagnostic guidelines.
    - i. The NCPN-FT will facilitate harmonization and validation of pathogen and pest detection methods according to accepted protocols to satisfy regulatory needs.
    - ii. The NCPN-FT will coordinate optimization and validation efforts with other entities such as the National Plant Diagnostic Network, academic institutions, USDA-APHIS, USDA-ARS, state agencies, and foreign plant protection agencies and scientists, where possible.

3. The NCPN-FT will establish and coordinate working relationships with and among appropriate entities that certify plants for planting.
  - a. The NCPN-FT will maintain a copy of the State Level Model Regulatory Standard: Virus-tested Certification Program for *Prunus*, *Malus*, *Pyrus*, *Chaenomeles*, and *Cydonia* Nursery Stock Production Systems, make it publicly available, and will review the standard for accuracy and effectiveness on a regular basis.
  - b. Maintain a catalogue of existing state certification programs.
4. The NCPN-FT will annually discuss progress in reaching NCPN-FT goals and will deliberate on concerns related to the domestic and international movement of virus-tested stock and budwood. As part of its role in ensuring adequate amounts of clean propagation material to meet industry needs, the NCPN-FT will prioritize and assign responsibilities to evaluate and act, if appropriate, on those concerns by working with fruit tree clean plant centers, government agencies, and industry to make the safe movement of clean plants for planting more efficient.

## Appendix B:

### Context Statement for the National Clean Plant Network - Fruit Trees:

The acquisition and distribution of virus-tested plants throughout the U.S. and abroad is achieved through four fruit tree clean plant centers; these centers are directed to the production of virus-tested material that feeds nursery certification programs throughout the U.S. The NCPN coordinates activities to reduce unnecessary duplication and produce a standardized product that will expedite interstate and international movement of virus-tested propagation material. The NCPN-FT helps ensure that requirements of the U.S. ornamental and fruit tree industries to acquire, plant and produce new varieties with improved phytosanitary status are met in the U.S.

The two primary acquisition sites for the importation of material from foreign sources are the United States Department of Agriculture Animal Plant Health Inspections Service Plant Germplasm Quarantine Program (USDA-APHIS-PGQP) located in Beltsville, MD, and the Clean Plant Center Northwest (CPCNW) located in Prosser, WA. The USDA-APHIS-PGQP primarily releases small numbers of accessions after testing; minimal therapy to eliminate pathogens is provided. The CPCNW maintains a departmental permit to accept pome and stone fruit tree budwood from foreign sources, to render it free of known viruses, and to release virus-tested budwood to cooperators in the country. The industry considers the ability to acquire foreign accessions pivotal in its efforts to stay competitive in the global market. The CPCNW provides most of the foundation grade material for the startup of state-monitored certification programs in the country, and for some foreign countries. CPCNW is the only functioning facility in the U.S. that annually provides heat therapy to eliminate virus from large numbers of infected stone and pome fruit cultivars. Furthermore, trees maintained in the CPCNW screenhouses are virus-tested and perceived by foreign quarantine organizations as a hygienic and preferred source for importation. CPCNW therefore plays a central role in the safe and efficient international distribution of new fruit tree varieties.

Material emanating from domestic sources such as public and private breeding programs can be tested at the CPCNW and at Foundation Plant Services (FPS) in University of California, Davis. FPS produces, tests, maintains, and distributes premium disease-tested propagating material for use by nurseries and growers in California, the U.S., and the world. FPS works with researchers and members of the fruit and nut tree industry in developing and introducing new materials originating from breeding programs, domestic and foreign public collections, and private plantings. The Foundation Orchard includes cultivars of almond, apricot, cherry, nectarine, peach, plum, and commonly-used rootstocks, and relies on the CPCNW program for importation and virus therapy. FPS is the state-designated program that houses and maintains the Foundation collections for the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Registration and Certification programs for deciduous fruit and nut trees. Thus, FPS stocks qualify and serve as principal source material for commercial increase, primarily for California industries.

The southeastern U.S. is home to the second largest peach production industry in the U.S. Trees used in this industry are primarily produced by three nurseries located in middle Tennessee. These nurseries also provide many of the fruit trees sold to homeowners through large retail outlet chains and mail-order services. In addition, these three nurseries supply trees to states from Virginia down the east coast to Florida and along the gulf coast to Texas. Accurate figures for production are not available, but 2 to 3 million trees are produced annually. For reasons primarily based on climate and a

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different business model, these programs operated largely independent of the programs in the western United States. Growers in South Carolina and Georgia and the three nurseries in Tennessee combined interests to establish an informally structured certification program. The program is operated out of Clemson University in South Carolina where expertise for virus testing resides. Orchards of commercially significant peach cultivars are identified by the growers and nurseries, and each tree is tested for Plum pox virus, Prunus necrotic ringspot virus, and Prune dwarf virus. Infected trees within the block are identified and removed. The virus indexing is repeated annually. The program also tests the block of trees used to produce seed of Guardian™ rootstock.

These programs have evolved to fill particular niches. While there is very little duplication, historically there was also little communication between programs. The NCPN-FT created a bridge between these four programs to facilitate the efficient and coordinated movement of material through the programs. This enhanced communication prevents unnecessary duplication, and formal recognition of sites provides additional security to the system for maintaining foundation-level varieties that have unique environmental requirements. These capabilities are critical as the tree fruit industry continues to evolve to meet market demands.

In most states, the increase from the small amount of material generated by foundation-level programs to meet grower needs is accomplished through nurseries operating in compliance with certification programs operated by state departments of agriculture, and funded by the industry using various mechanisms. The NCPN-FT has developed a harmonized national standard for state certification programs to facilitate the interstate movement of this virus-tested propagation material.

Because of the effort of programs across the country, the stone and pome fruit tree and nut industries of the U.S. have enjoyed many years of relative shelter from serious virus issues. Much of this activity has occurred unnoticed by the growers. An aggressive outreach effort is required to promote the continued use of virus-tested material and of the benefits of the standards established by the NCPN-FT.

Research is required to accelerate the passage of propagation material through quarantine (virus testing and elimination), and to improve the efficiency of the larger-scale testing required by state certification programs. Research that is currently performed at the four mentioned sites should be encouraged to address needs directly related to activities of the NCPN-FT.

Many industry needs for clean planting stock are met through fruit tree clean plant center operations. However, other aspects that influence plant movement affect the efficient delivery of important new cultivars to the industry, as do some procedures regarding virus detections. Although these issues are, at times, beyond the realm of the NPCN-FT's commission, they ultimately affect NCPN-FT operations and the industry. Since the NCPN-FT Tier 2 includes industry, regulatory, and academic representation, it is an appropriate forum to discuss matters affecting access to virus-tested propagation material and to provide subject matter expertise for such issues as deemed appropriate by the Tier 2 committee.

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