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# Common Pool Resource Issues in Managing Herbicide Resistant Weeds

# David Ervin Professor of Economics & Env. Management Portland State University

USDA ERS and Farm Foundation Conference "Public and Private Sector Policy Implications of Research on the Economics of Herbicide Resistance Management."

November 8, 2013

## Outline

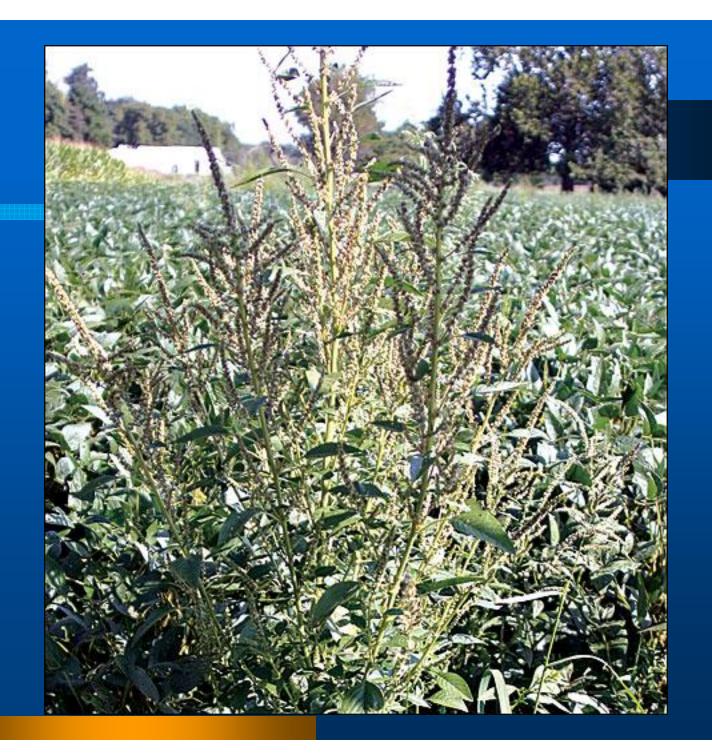
- Problem context of herbicide resistance (HR)
- Common pool resource (CPR) complications
- Lessons from other CPR situations
- Implications for developing private and public collective institutions

#### **Problem Context**

- Escalating herbicide resistance poses serious economic and environmental risks (NRC).
- Potential economic impacts include lower yields and increased costs.
- Potential environmental impacts include soil erosion, water quality, human health, etc.
- Public and private programs to control HR weeds have not slowed its spread overall.

#### Problem Context cont'd

- No silver bullet technology on horizon
- Mobile herbicide resistance traits move across farm boundaries
- Solutions require collective action by heterogeneous growers in varying settings.
- This complexity requires interdisciplinary research by natural and social scientists working with growers.



# Working Hypothesis

Sustainable HR management will require private and/or public collective institutions to address CPR issues via adaptive management strategies.

# Common Pool Resource Complications

- Grower actions affect the welfare of other growers via weed gene movement.
- Hence, strategies to promote individual HR BMPs are insufficient to optimize the welfare of the farm community as a whole.
- Some form of private and/or public collective action is necessary.

# Design Principles for CPR Mgmt (Ostrom)

- 1. Clearly defined resource boundaries
- 2. Rules adapted to local conditions
- 3. Broad participation by "appropriators"
- 4. Monitoring accountable to the appropriators with sanctions

# Design Principles for CPR Mgmt (Ostrom)

- 5. Scale of graduated sanctions
- 6. Cheap and easy conflict resolution mechanisms
- 7. Self-determination of the community recognized by higher authorities
- 8. Larger issues may need "polycentric" governance with multiple layers.

# Lessons from other CPR programs

- Invasive and noxious weed control
  - State regulatory approach
  - Formation of weed management areas recognizes need for community-wide effort
  - WMAs can define problem boundaries as watersheds, land use areas, etc.
  - Non-compliance procedures defined

# Lessons from other CPR programs

- Boll weevil eradication
  - Caused by mobile insect that affected common pool of regional resources
  - Three agencies in polycentric approach
    - State DoAs regulatory
    - APHIS technical advice
    - CSREES info dissemination & education
  - Required 2/3 vote on referendum to expand into new areas

# Lessons from other CPR programs

- Irrigation (Ostrom, Stern and Dietz)
  - Common pool of regional water resources
  - Collective approaches were alternatives to privatization or government programs
  - Spain, California and Nepal examples
  - Recognition of need for adaptive management

# But CPR programs are complex....

- Agrawal (2003) meta review
- Factors affecting formation do not have unequivocal effects, e.g., size of group
- Higher group heterogeneity not always a disadvantage
- Need to account for resource, social/political contexts and personal values

# Concluding observations

- 1. HR results from the interplay of biophysical, technological, economic and social factors. Leave any out at your peril!
- 2. Research on the roles of human and social capital in causing and arresting HR has been neglected.
- 3. Reliance on individual farmer approaches will fail with mobile HR traits.

# Concluding observations

- 4. Private and public collective approaches are necessary but will impose cost.
- 5. Ostrom's design principles can help guide their development.
- 6. Success likely will come from participatory research using local knowledge that minimizes transaction costs.

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## Socio-Economic Drivers of HR

- Crop prices
- Costs of alternative herbicide technologies
- Company HR BMP incentives
- Farm household income
- Grower personal values about environmental stewardship

## Socio-Economic Drivers of HR

- Farm program provisions, e.g., conservation compliance
- Community social network (support and peer pressure)
- Grower education
- Other?

### HR Environmental Assessment

- Resistance management depends on gene mobility, BMP use and pesticide market structure (Miranowski & Carlson).
- Environmental assessments of HR therefore must integrate human behavior.
- Altering spatial and dynamic patterns of HR environmental impacts requires more interdisciplinary science.

## HR Environmental Assessment

- Voluntary ag conservation programs, e.g., education, without incentives have limited effect (Ervin).
- Knowledge of socioeconomic factors with large HR management leverage under CPR conditions is needed.
- The challenge is to design programs for local conditions that integrate learning and adaptive management.

## Salient Questions

- 1. How does the interplay of biophysical, economic and social factors affect growers' herbicide management?
- 2. Can we identify different types of growers that are influenced by different sets of factors?
- 3. What variables influence the efficacy of private or public collective management institutions?