

PVMI --The Potato Variety Management Institute

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PVMI was the creation of the three Potato Commissions of Idaho, Oregon and Washington, for the purposes of returning the value of the new potato varieties back to the Tri-State breeding program. It was formed in 2005, when the three commissions each contributed \$25,000 to start the company and undergo a feasibility study. A consultant was hired, a USDA Value Added Producer Grant acquired, and a business and marketing plan was created. PVMI became active in July, 2006 with the hiring of the Executive Director. PVMI is a non-profit, grower controlled organization. Its policies and practices are determined by the 9 member Board, six of whom are growers (2 from each of the three states) and 3 of whom are potato commission staff (1 from each of the three states). In the future a representative from the research community will sit on the board as well.

The main function of PVMI is to administer license agreements and royalty payments collected from seed growers, so that the proceeds are returned to the breeding program. PVMI is designed to return value to the growers of the Tri-State area by a license and royalty structure that favors Tri-State growers.

PVMI also aims to market and help with the acceleration of the commercialization process for new varieties. This includes monitoring and administering early commercial evaluation and testing. One of PVMI's main jobs is to make sure new varieties are protected internationally. If a new variety should inadvertently be released abroad and not protected this could become public and no longer the intellectual property of the Tri-State breeding program. PVMI is set up to monitor foreign movement and register the new variety to protect Plant Breeders Rights abroad where foreign demand would like to exploit these new Tri-State varieties.

What will this mean for the future? PVMI hopes to use resources to help educate and market to end users so that the public knows how better to use the new varieties. It plans to market to retailers, processors and quick service restaurants for increased awareness of the properties of the new varieties and so that maximum commercial potential can be realized.

By instigating a process for advanced commercialization, the 13 to 15 year wait between first cross and commercial release and PVP can be shortened significantly, allowing users to evaluate the market potential before the actual release date.

Many growers and end users who depend on the current Tri-State breeding program do not realize how much of these funds are from federal sources. Should there ever be a shortfall from the federal government, PVMI, by returning funds to the breeding program, will help support continued research.

By marketing to end users PVMI hopes to move a commodity into a specialty. Just think about where apples were 30 years ago, and now. Now, there are a dozen or more types you know by name, with as many different price points. You have come to know apples by their varietal name, and as such are willing to pay more for the type you prefer. Potatoes can be very much like apples, it is a matter of making the commitment to the marketing and education required for people to recognize the qualities and valuable traits and differences between cultivars. The United Kingdom is much more advanced than the U.S. at the moment. In the west the Russet has been king and we can benefit by starting to properly market the varieties and uses of potatoes to the end users.

How can you get involved?

1. If a seed grower, obtain a license for PVMI varieties (see contact details above)
2. Check the website www.pvmi.org for new varieties that are currently available to evaluate
3. Provide feedback to PVMI as to what you would like to see in new varieties
4. Share what you see as marketing opportunities for new varieties