

MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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April, 2006 Volume 20, No. 2

A Note From The Board

By Bill Bauer – Bauer Berry Farm, Champlin, MN

Hello from one of the newest MFVGA Board Members. I consider it a privilege to serve on the governing body of an organization designed to serve and educate fruit and vegetable growers while acting as a liaison to the public. My goal is to serve as well as my predecessors.

Since our farm produces both fruits and vegetables, we understand and appreciate the work done by the MFVGA. And because our farm lies within the metropolitan boundaries, we have unique obstacles to overcome, not the least of which is neighboring suburbanites who may fail to understand that their farming neighbors have different characteristics than other backyard neighbors. In May of each year, for example, they might witness all-night activity and engine noise during frost protection. And before our deer exclusion fence was installed, they may have been startled by shining lights and noise making equipment, designed to scare away the white-tail which are certainly up to no good on a fruit and vegetable farm.

Each year we are often asked by our picking customers if we are “organic”. Much as we might like to answer in the affirmative, the answer is always no. Like it or not, most commercial farmers rely on the judicious use of pesticides. While we do monitor our fields for pests and apply pesticides appropriately, pesticide use is but one small part of our overall management scheme. Better monitoring has led to substantially decreased use of chemicals and that’s good for both farmers and consumers. Pesticide use always presents potential problems, and in an urban area the potential is magnified as neighbors are much closer to the farm than they might be in rural areas. But the truth is, safe handling and application of pesticides, not to mention worker protection are major concerns anywhere agricultural plants are produced.

And speaking of worker protection, now is the time to be thinking about WPS, the federal law which requires owners of farms, forests, nurseries, or greenhouses where pesticides are used to follow specifically prescribed procedures for protecting employees. This is federal law enforced by state departments of agriculture. Aside from this fact, however, there are other reasons for those of us involved in plant and food production to be aware of this law: it

makes good business sense to protect our employees as well as ourselves! We would never operate a piece of equipment in an unsafe manner, nor would we allow an untrained employee to operate sophisticated equipment. So why would we take chances with the health of our employees (or ourselves)? Not only is this the law, it is a matter of employer responsibility, personal liability and good, common sense!

My preference is to educate with a carrot rather than a stick. Motivation, not fear, provides the better learning environment. From personal experience I will report that non-compliance can, and eventually will, lead to citations and monetary fines in Minnesota. Visits by enforcement inspectors from the MDA are unannounced and random. Fortunately, compliance with the Worker Protection Standard is not difficult and it all makes good sense. If you are unsure of how this applies to you, please visit the MDA website at www.mda.state.mn.us/. At the top of the page you will see MDA A-Z. Click on this for an alphabetized list of topics. Click on W and scroll down to Worker Protection. You must be qualified to train your workers, but this too, is not difficult. If you are not already a Private Pesticide Applicator, you may obtain this certification on-line and be qualified to train your employees. If you still have questions, feel free to call me at 763-421-4384 and I will attempt to direct you to more resources. Have a successful and safe growing season!

Berry IPM Field Day Mark Your Calendars

When:
Wednesday, May 24, 2006

Where:
Afton Apple Orchard in Hastings, MN

A full day of berry Integrated Pest Management (IPM) classes and practical field application is planned.

A brochure and registration form will be mailed when details are finalized. Information will also be posted at www.mfvga.org. For more information, contact the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400 or mfvga@msn.com.

MFVGA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
October 1, 2005 - September 30, 2006

“Thank You”
to our Conference Sponsors &
Supporters

Farm/Company Name _____
 Phone (_____) _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State ____ Zip Code _____
 Crops _____
 Primary Crop _____

Names of direct members:

(grower, spouse, employees, partners)

MEMBERS:

Gross Sales	Dues	
Up to \$25,000	\$ 75.00	
\$25,000 - \$75,000	125.00	
\$75,000 - \$225,000	225.00	
Over \$225,000	325.00	\$ _____

Direct Membership includes a subscription to one of the following periodicals. Please indicate which publication you would like to receive. Choose one.

- ____ American Fruit Grower
- ____ The Fruit Growers News
- ____ American Vegetable Grower
- ____ The Vegetable Growers News
- ____ Northland Berry News

(An additional \$10.00 fee is required to receive the Northland Berry News.) \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

(Dues are \$25.00 per year.)

Associate members are related agri-business firms, educators, and suppliers. \$ _____

Contributions or gifts to MFVGA are not tax deductible as charitable contributions; however, they may be tax deductible as ordinary and necessary business expenses.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO MFVGA

Mail to: MFVGA
 c/o Marilyn Nysetvold Johnson, Exec. Coordinator
 15125 W. Vermillion Cir. NE
 Ham Lake, MN 55304
 Questions? Call 763-434-0400

A number of our exhibitors as well as other businesses and associations helped to support the 2006 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference and the MFVGA by contributing dollars to offset our cost of providing refreshments in the trade show area and by helping to defray some of the other costs associated with the conference. Their contributions and support help us to provide high quality programming for growers at a reasonable price. Please join us in thanking the following companies and associations for the sponsorship and support of this year’s conference:

- Agro-K Corporation
- AgStar Financial Services
- Central Minnesota Vegetable Growers Association
- DeVries Manufacturing, Inc.
- Isanti County Equipment, Inc.
- Stark Bros. Nurseries & Orchard Co.
- St. Paul Growers Association
- Stokes Seeds, Inc.
- Syngenta Seeds
- UAP Northern Plains – Howe

Special thanks go to the USDA – Risk Management Agency for providing dollars through a partnership agreement that has helped to offset a variety of conference and promotional expenses.

The MFVGA Newsletter is published five times a year (February, April, July, October and December) in cooperation with the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Editorial office: MFVGA, c/o Marilyn Nysetvold Johnson, Exec. Coordinator, 15125 W. Vermillion Cir. NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304. Phone: 763-434-0400 Fax: 763-413-9585. Please address all correspondence, advertising and membership inquiries to MFVGA at the above address. Deadlines for future issues: The first day of the month preceding publication (For example: March 1st for the April issue).

The information in this MFVGA Newsletter is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association is implied.

MDA Launching New Directory of Organic Farms and Farm Products

St. Paul, MN. – Responding to the rising interest in organic, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) invites certified organic growers to participate in a new directory of organic farms and farm products in Minnesota.

Directory listings are free and open to all certified organic farms, including farms that are completely organic as well as “split operations” (farms that are part conventional and part organic). The new directory should be off the press later this spring and will list the sources of Minnesota’s certified organic grains, forages, livestock, fruits or vegetables.

“This directory will have multiple uses and benefits,” said MDA Organic and Diversification Specialist Meg Moynihan, who is coordinating the project. “Producers can use it to increase their visibility to buyers or form marketing alliances. They could even use it to identify what’s not grown so they can enter unfilled market niches. In addition, organic livestock producers can use it to find organic grain, forages, and animals.”

Unlike the Minnesota Grown Directory, which serves more than 600 farms that sell directly to end consumers, the Minnesota Organic Farm and Farm Products Directory is designed for “intermediate” buyers such as organic food manufacturers, marketers, brokers, dairy farms, grocery stores, organic dairy farms, restaurants, and other food service operations.

The MDA estimates that there are about 500 certified organic farms in Minnesota, with another 100 to 125 certified organic companies that turn organic raw materials into organic food and feed products. “Helping organic producers and buyers connect with each other is an important role our agency plays,” noted Moynihan.

The directory will be available in a print version and on the MDA’s web site. Publication of the new directory is partially funded by the USDA Risk Management Agency.

Producers who have participated in MDA-sponsored organic programs should have received a directory listing form in the mail. Producers who didn’t receive an application form may obtain one by calling Kara Ferguson at 651-201-6609 or visiting www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic. The application deadline is April 28.



Senator Steve Dille Farm Tour

When: July 1, 2006

Where: Dille Farm near Dassel, MN
(69800 305th Street)

Presented by the
Crow River Sustainable Farming Association

In addition to serving as state senator from District 20 for the past several years, Steve Dille is also a veterinarian who, with his wife, Pamela, farms 640 acres on the Crow River near Dassel. As Ranking Minority Member on both the Agriculture, Veterans and Gaming Committee, and the Committee for Finance-Environment, Agriculture and Economic Budget Division, Dille has sponsored legislation that has been of great interest to groups all across the spectrum, from environmentalist to agribusiness, to family farm advocates, to rural governments.

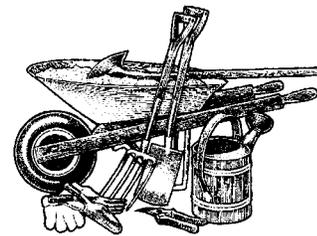
In addition to the morning (10:30) and afternoon (2:30) tours, there will be a picnic forum at 1:00 with the senator, moderated by Mary Jo Forbord, Executive Director for Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. There will be a potluck lunch, with fresh farm foods, at noon.

Admission for the day is \$10 per family for Sustainable Farming Association members, \$15 per family for non-members.

For more information, contact Jerry Ford, Crow River Sustainable Farming Association, at 320-543-3394 (jerry@marienne.com) or visit www.sfa-mn.org.

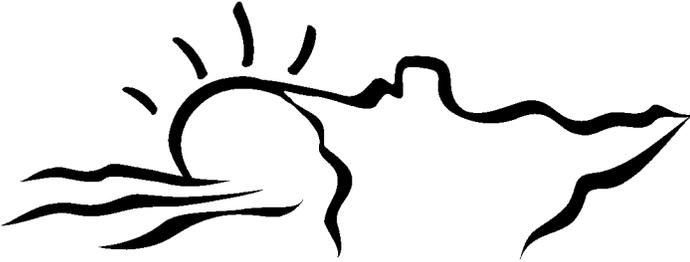
Steve Poppe Joins MFVGA Board of Directors

The MFVGA membership elected Steve Poppe from Morris, Minnesota to serve a three-year term on the MFVGA Board of Directors at their annual meeting in February. Steve owns and operates Steve’s Strawberries near Morris. Steve also coordinates the environmental horticulture program at the West Central Research & Outreach Center in Morris, MN. Welcome to the Board, Steve.



Thank you, Dan Whitcomb

MFVGA would like to thank Dan Whitcomb for his leadership on the MFVGA Board of Directors for the last six years. Dan, we appreciate your commitment to MFVGA and your dedication to providing fruit and vegetable producers throughout Minnesota and the region with educational opportunities and resources to improve their production skills and marketing techniques.



MINNESOTA GROWN

Fresh From Your Neighbor

Minnesota Olympian Becomes Minnesota Grown Spokesperson

Carrie Tollefson, member of the 2004 USA Olympic Team and native of Dawson, Minnesota, was introduced as the new spokesperson for the Minnesota Grown Program at the March 14 Marketing Conference. Tollefson is a big supporter of locally grown products and will be appearing in Minnesota Grown TV ads, at special events like the Minnesota Grown Marketing Conference and will be featured in the printed and on-line versions of the Minnesota Grown Directory for the next three years.

Carrie will help make the connection between eating fresh, local foods and being healthy and active. As a world class athlete, Carrie knows how important it is for her to eat healthy foods, which means she chooses locally grown, whole foods whenever possible.

Carrie recently won the US Indoor Championship in the 3000 meter race and placed 7th in the same distance at the World Championships in Russia. She is based in St. Paul where she trains for the 2008 Olympics that will be held in China.

2006 Television Campaign Set

KMSP (Ch 9) and UPN (Ch 29) are on-board as the Official Media Partners for the 2006 Minnesota Grown Directory. The partnership includes \$55,000 of paid ads promoting Minnesota Grown products available at farmers' markets, grocery stores, apple orchards, pumpkin patches, wineries and from livestock producers. The farmers' market schedule is the first paid ad of the year and begins in early July. The Minneapolis and St. Paul Farmers' Markets each contribute 1/3 of the cost of the farmers' market ad with the remaining 1/3 paid for by the Minnesota Grown Program.

In addition to paid ads, both stations will feature a tile ad on the home page for the entire year, provide a no-charge Public Service Ad schedule for the full year and provide other extras like 12 weeks of the Official Meteorologist Campaign. If you have a special event scheduled, please let Paul Hugunin know about it so we can submit it for inclusion in the Community Calendar portion of their web sites.

The Minnesota Grown Program is also partnering with the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association to air over \$20,000 of ads promoting GardenMinnesota.com This is a relatively new web site

that provides consumers with landscaping and gardening tips and links them to landscaping professionals. The Minnesota Grown Directory is a featured link on the website. This ad campaign will be airing on KSTP (Ch. 5) during the first three weeks of May. The station will also be including a gardening/landscaping tips segment in their midday news program twice each week from May through October.

2006 Directory is Largest Ever

The 2006 Directory will have over 610 listings and will easily be the largest Minnesota Grown Directory ever printed. Distribution will include 170,000 printed copies and the entire Directory will be available on-line at www.minnesotagrown.com. If you'd like multiple copies for distribution in your area, contact Brian Erickson at brian.j.erickson@state.mn.us or 651-201-6539.

Marketing Conference Draws Over 100

Nearly 110 marketers from all over the state made it through terrible driving conditions to attend the Minnesota Grown Marketing Conference on March 14 in St. Paul. All the scheduled speakers were able to make it to town on time and provided attendees with a full day of marketing, motivation and networking. Plans for the 2007 conference are underway. Your ideas and suggestions for topics and speakers are greatly appreciated! Contact Paul at 651-201-6510 or by e-mail at paul.hugunin@state.mn.us

Minnesota Grown information is supplied to MFVGA by Paul Hugunin (651-201-6510) and Brian Erickson (651-201-6539) from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Ag Marketing Services Division. If you have any questions about Minnesota Grown, contact them at the numbers listed above.

2006 Proceedings Books Available

If you were unable to attend the 2006 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference, but would like a copy of the conference Proceedings Book, copies are available from the MFVGA office for \$17.00 each.

The 2006 Proceedings Book contains information from many of the talks given at the educational conference and includes articles on asparagus production, berry production, carrot production, high tunnel production, marketing, onion production, organic production, specialty crop production, sweet corn production and more.

To receive a copy of the 2006 Proceedings, send your check for \$17.00 (payable to MFVGA) to the MFVGA office at 15125 W. Vermillion Cir, NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304.



Dr. Cindy Tong

Dept. of Horticultural Science
University of Minnesota

All-American Selections

It's spring cleaning time, and it's about time, too! I think it's been at least two years since I sorted through the piles of papers in my office. One of the piles of papers are factsheets sent to me from the National Garden Bureau, including information on All-American Selections (AAS). If you are still looking for different varieties of vegetables to grow this year, you may be interested in some of this information. Note that members of the National Garden Bureau and members of the Board of Directors of AAS are seed companies. However, any plant breeder can submit a new variety for trialing as an AAS, and winners are determined by independent judges around the country. A breeder pays \$400 to enter a variety in the trials, and if his or her variety wins, then the breeder pays an assessment (minimum \$2,000 per year) to AAS. The maximum assessment is 10% of seed sales to the home garden seed industry (including bedding plant industry) in North America, not to exceed \$20,000 per year.

So, going back, the AAS vegetable winners from 1997 to 2006 were:

Year	Winners	Characteristics
1997	basil 'Siam Queen' cabbage 'Dynamo' okra 'Cajun Delight'	large, thick leaves, ready to harvest 75-100 days after sowing, plant is 2-3' tall x 2' wide with purple stems small, 2-2½ lb. blue-green heads, plants mature in 70 days from transplanting plant 4' tall x 2' wide, pods mature in 50-55 days after transplanting (transplant at 68° F temperature reached)
1998	lemon basil 'Sweet Dani' swiss chard 'Bright Lights'	strong lemon scent, height 2' multicolor stems, matures in 55 days, height 18-20"
1999	pumpkin 'Wee-B-Little' squash 'Eight Ball' tomato 'Juliet' watermelon 'New Queen'	small, 1 lb. fruit, open-pollinated plants spread 6-8' round, dark green fruit 3" in diameter that mature in 40-45 days, plants are bush types Roma type 1-2 oz. fruit, plants indeterminate, sets 60 days after transplanting orange-flesh, ice-box type fruit with medium green skin and dark green stripes, vines spread up to 9', matures 63 days from transplanting
2000	cabbage 'Savoy Express' pepper 'Blushing Beauty' sweet corn 'Indian Summer' pea 'Mr. Big'	small, light-green, 1-1½ lb. heads with crinkly leaves, matures in 55 days from transplanting sweet bell pepper with thick-walled, 4" x 4" fruit that turn from ivory to blush to red at full ripeness, produces fruit in 72 days after transplanting supersweet type with multicolor kernels (white, yellow, red, and purple) on 8" cobs, must be isolated from other sweet corn varieties to maintain color English peas with large, 4-4½" pods with about 8 peas per pod on indeterminate vines, matures in 60 days
2001	onion 'Super Star' pepper 'Giant Marconi' sweet corn 'Honey Select' tomato 'Jolly'	first onion to win AAS award in 53 years, day-neutral white onion with mild, sweet flavor, bulbs 2-3 lb. and round to flattened globular shape, about 100 days from sowing fruit 2-3" wide by 6-8" long with 2-4 lobes, has sweet, smoky flavor, good for grilling, 70-82 days from sowing TripleSweet™ sugary enhanced (75%) and supersweet (25%) type with yellow kernels on 8" cobs, isolation not required, 79 days from sowing large, cherry-type, pink fruit with a peach shape and pointed end produced on clusters of 9-14 fruit, vines indeterminate, 70-90 days from sowing
2002	basil 'Magical Michael' cucumber 'Diva' pumpkin 'Orange Smoothie' pumpkin 'Sorcerer' winter squash 'Cornell's Bush Delicata'	sweet basil type, plants 15" tall x 16" wide with dark green leaves, harvest 50 days after sowing slicing type with smooth-skinned, semi-glossy, seedless fruit, matures in 55-60 days after sowing, strong tolerance to powdery and downy mildew smooth, 4-7 lb., medium dark orange fruit bred for Halloween painting, 90-100 days after sowing large, dark orange, up to 22 lb. fruit with upright and uniform shape, vines spread 10', 100 days from sowing delicata-type, 7-9" long x 3-4" wide, 1½ - 2 lb., cream with dark green striped and flecked fruit, strong tolerance to powdery mildew, 85-100 days from sowing
2003	melon 'Angel'	Mediterranean-type, 2-3 lb. fruit with white flesh and skin that turns creamy yellow when mature, 80 days from sowing

Gleanings continued on page 6

Gleanings continued from page 5

	summer squash 'Papaya Pear'	pear-shaped, yellow, 6 oz. fruit that can be harvested 40 days after sowing
2004	melon 'Amy'	canary-type, 2-3 lb. globular, yellow fruit with white flesh that can be harvested 85 days from sowing
	watermelon 'Sweet Beauty'	ice-box type, 6-7 lb., oblong fruit with bright red flesh that can be harvested 79 days from sowing
	winter squash 'Sunshine'	fruit like a small pumpkin, with bright orange, stringless flesh and orange-red skin, vines spread 6-8', matures in 95 days from sowing
2005	eggplant 'Fairy Tale'	elongated, 1-2" wide x 4-6" long, lavender fruit with white, lengthwise stripes, plants 18-24" tall, 49-55 days from transplanting
	tomato 'Sugary'	grape-type, ½ oz., 1-1½", rosy-pink fruit borne on clusters, plants semi-indeterminate and can be grown in cages without pruning, 80 days from sowing
	winter squash 'Bonbon'	buttercup-type with deep green skin with silver stripes and dark orange flesh, fruits 6" in diameter, vines spread 8', 88 days from sowing
2006	carrot 'Purple Haze'	imperator-type, purple roots with orange interior, purple color fades when cooked except when cooked quickly (sautéd), roots 12" long with 2½" shoulders, 70 days from sowing
	cilantro 'Delfino'	coriander with fine, fern-like foliage with strong parsley-citrus flavor, bolts at high temperature, 50-55 days from sowing
	pepper 'Carmen'	sweet pepper with elongated, 2½" wide x 6" long, 5 oz. fruit that turn green to red when fully ripe (75 days after transplanting), plants are upright bush-type
	pepper 'Mariachi'	mild chile-type with pendant, 4" long x 2" wide, 1½ oz. fruit that turn creamy white to rosy red and red when fully ripe, Scoville ratings 500-600 when grown under non-stressful conditions, 66 days from transplanting

First Annual Minnesota Garlic Festival

The first annual Minnesota Garlic Festival will be held August 12, 2006 from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Wright County Fairgrounds in Howard Lake, MN. Admission is \$5.00 for adults and \$3.00 for kids under 12. There is free on-site parking.

The first annual Minnesota Garlic Festival is the premiere event for lovers of garlic and good times and promotes gourmet garlic farming in Minnesota. Family friendly, fun-filled and fragrant, this festival features local foods, chefs, music, artisans, games, competitions, and lots of garlic – all in support of a healthy environment, family farms and the vital rural communities in Minnesota.

Minnesota garlic growers will have their fresh 2006 gourmet garlic available which will keep in your kitchen for up to a year. There are over 100 varieties of garlic grown here, all planted in October and harvested in July. Other than the great taste, it is well documented that garlic is one of the healthiest foods you can eat.

Entertainers include Papa John Kolstad and the Hot Club of East Lake; kid's musician Will Hale; the Garlic Diva, Kitty Karn; Bella Voce, performing acapella medieval and renaissance music with a twist; and Marianne Kreitlow, composer of the top ten garlic hits "I Like Garlic", "The Vampire Song (Put Down the Garlic)" and "The Stinking Rose" – all in a country picnic setting.

Come to farm country and taste the bounty!

The festival is presented by the Crow River Sustainable Farming Association. They welcome market farmers, artists, craftspeople, exhibitors and relevant vendors! For more information contact Mary Schmidt (320-485-3562) or saam@tds.net or visit www.sfa-mn.org.

RESOLUTIONS

MINNESOTA FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION 2006 ANNUAL MEETING – ST. CLOUD CIVIC CENTER ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA

RIGHT TO FARM:

We support the RIGHT TO FARM law.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (B.M.P.'s):

We support the development of Best Management Practices with inputs from producers, researchers and suppliers. We oppose the establishment of mandatory Best Management Practices.

FARM CHEMICALS, PESTICIDES AND FERTILIZERS:

Because pollution comes from many sources other than the farming sector, we oppose additional taxes on farm chemicals and fertilizers. We oppose legislation which would regulate the sale and farm use of nitrogen fertilizers, and we oppose unnecessary restrictions on chemicals or liabilities resulting from the use of chemicals, as per label instructions. We support research and development of Best Management Practices for the greatest economic return and safe use of nitrogen products. We encourage the use of returnable, recyclable or reusable chemical containers.

REGULATED PESTICIDE USE:

We support federal and state government regulation on regulated pesticide use. However, we oppose any local (city, township, etc.) government intervention on regulated pesticide use.

GROUNDWATER:

We support a program of research projects and education in susceptible areas as designated by groundwater legislation for possible contaminants in the groundwater. We also support state grants and monies to fund these research projects and education.

IRRIGATION:

Irrigation insures a continued adequate supply of food and fiber for all people; therefore, we oppose a tax on agricultural usage, and continued increases of water usage fees.

WETLANDS PROTECTION:

We support efforts to preserve Minnesota's wetlands, but advocate a reasonable approach to agricultural drainage. We oppose unreasonable restrictions on the repair and cleanout of existing drainage systems. We support the compensation of land owners who are denied the use of their land.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT:

We support controlled management environments of deer and other wildlife in agricultural areas and we support the right to hunt all legal species within the guidelines of federal and state laws. We consider baiting to be deemed illegal only if it is not normal farming practices.

TRESPASS LAW:

We support the Minnesota Trespass law and would support the elimination of all exceptions currently allowed. Privately owned land should be automatically considered posted. Anyone using private property for recreation and/or hunting must carry written permission from landowners.

CRP ACRES:

We oppose the use of program acreage land to produce fruit and vegetable crops that directly compete with crops grown on non-program acreage.

Whereas the vegetable and small fruit industries have never received subsidies or price supports from the federal government but have been dependent on prices set by supply and demand, the Association is on record as opposing any provisions in federal farm legislation that would allow farmers to plant vegetables and fruit for the fresh market on acreage for which they receive government payments under commodity subsidy programs but allowing provisions for growers to plant and avoid losing base acres for land planted to contracted processing vegetables if the subsidy payment for the year in which the vegetable crop is planted is forfeited for such acreage.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND WORKERS COMPENSATION:

We support revisions in Minnesota's Workers Unemployment Compensation laws to lessen the burden on producers to allow them to be competitive with producers in neighboring states. We support changes in the Workers Compensation laws which limit the amounts of compensation an injured worker may receive. We oppose extending unemployment benefits to workers who voluntarily quit their job, workers who are students on a full-time basis, or migrants who have relocated to a different job market.

FOOD SAFETY:

In order to assure the continued abundant, safe and wholesome food supply in the United States, we support uniform laws setting pesticide tolerance levels based on scientific research. We oppose the scare tactics used with media cooperation which causes people to believe not only the food in question, but all food has been contaminated without supporting scientific evidence. We support increasing the percentage of tolerance levels testing at importation sites.

BIOTECHNOLOGY:

We encourage the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to develop technology. We encourage studies in the area of biotechnology and support solid research to make the facts known to growers who can then make good decisions based on correct information.

MARKETING:

Be it resolved, we are opposed to the concept of minimum pricing for agricultural products.

MINNESOTA GROWN PROMOTION GROUP:

We support the continued cooperation of agricultural commodity groups and the State of Minnesota in the promotion of Minnesota Grown products.

U of M HORTICULTURAL BUDGET CUTS:

We advocate the expenditure by the University of Minnesota to maintain and enhance agricultural research and departmental positions. We oppose budget cuts affecting the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the horticulture positions at the U of M Research and Outreach Centers. The U of M Extension Service and the Research and Outreach Centers are a very important resource for the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association as well as its individual members. Budget cuts and the loss of horticulture field positions at the U of M and the Research Centers greatly reduce the resources and applied research available to Minnesota's fruit and vegetable growers. We encourage the University to restore funding to the Extension Service and to fund horticulture field positions and technical staff positions so applied horticultural research in Minnesota may continue.

How to be the Kind of Employer You Would Want to Work For

By Sarah Fogleman, Extension Agricultural Economist, Southeast Area; K-State Research & Extension, for presentation at Kansas State University's Risk and Profit Conference, August 16 & 17, 2001. Taken from the National Ag Risk Education Library.

It's a sad fact that many agricultural businesspeople have gotten too good at what they do. If this statement sounds wrong to you, examine the theory behind it. Producers have gotten better at producing, in many cases, allowing their business to grow. But with those larger businesses come more responsibilities and, frequently, more need for labor that, at one time, would have been provided by an individual family. Both declining family sizes and larger operations have increased the overall need for hired labor. Unfortunately, the management of that labor is an area where most producers have no interest or formal training, resulting in a spectrum of challenges and frustrations that leave many managers hovering between a decision to expand or not. Those who choose to curb growth are unable to, perhaps, make the most efficient use of their resources, frequently working more hours than they should to make up for an overall labor shortage. Those who choose to expand and hire labor are forced to deal with challenges, great and small, that can take their attention away from the aspects of the business they enjoy most. Therefore, they have gotten so good at doing what they do that they don't do it anymore.

Human resource management does not have to be a thorn in every agricultural employer's side. There are ways for some individuals to take on non-family workers, blend them into the existing framework of the business, and enjoy a much more enjoyable and relaxing work environment where the owner/operator is not constantly concerned with the day-to-day management of every aspect of the business.

Other employers may have more difficulty with the process. They may see the additional employees as just an additional thing to manage. They may find themselves frequently saying, "it's faster and easier for me to just do it myself." Or, perhaps they might say, "I don't know what I'm paying them for, I end up doing all the work."

If either of these sentences sound familiar to you, ask yourself a hard question to answer: why? An even harder question to answer might be, "would *you* like working for *you*?"

No one ever said that employee management would be easy, but it doesn't have to be difficult. If there were one rule relating the management of human resources in agriculture it would be golden – do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

1. Use job descriptions.

Many agricultural managers are anti-job description because they feel having a written account for a person's position will either open the business up to legal risks or allow that person to say, "I'm not going to do that. It isn't in my job description." Those are two myths that are attached to job descriptions. In fact, having a well-

written job description can help minimize the chance of either of those things happening.

In recent years, job descriptions have become very popular as valuable instruments of employee management. They give potential and current employees an accurate picture of the position. The last thing an employer wants to do is hire someone who has a misperception about what the position will entail. That person, in that situation, is almost doomed from the start. A comparable problem arises when an existing employee is unclear about what the day-to-day and long-term expectations are about his or her position.

Also, the job description is the best place for an employer to communicate to the employee exactly what the performance standards are for that position. It is a common trap that most agricultural managers fall into, assuming their employees know what is expected of them. But as one employee once said, "If they'd only show me the hoops, I'd jump through them."

A job description is always subject to change. It should change and evolve with the business, position and employee. It can be as detailed or general, as need be, as long as it conveys the requirements an employee will have to meet to be successful in the position.

From employee recruitment and selection to performance evaluation and compensation, managers can use job descriptions to ensure that the business and the employee have the same perceptions of the position and performance expectations.

2. Lay out the ground rules.

No one likes to play in a game where the other players make up the rules as they go along. For many agricultural employees, that's exactly the kind of situation in which they work. An owner or manager tells the employees what their compensation package is going to contain, or what the typical work week will look like, or what the business policy on vacation time will be at exactly the moment when the employer needs to make a point. That is information that should be laid out, explicitly, in advance. For example, even if the business has always had a no-smoking policy, it will look bad if that point is only brought out after the manager sees the employee smoking on business property. That is a rule that needs to be clearly defined and presented to all employees.

The best way to lay out the ground rules is through the employee handbook. Most managers put off writing handbooks because they either don't know how to start or they expect it to be an easy, three week process and they eventually abandon it after they realize that it is very difficult and time-consuming.

An employee handbook will typically contain several sections:

a. A statement of the organization's Mission, Vision, and Values.

These are incredibly important things to communicate because they state to employees exactly what the business is about. They are the framework around which all other things are built.

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b. A detailed outline of the business's compensation elements.

Employers should take all possible precautions to make sure that an employee has the same expectations of a compensation package as the employer. It can ruin a work relationship when the employer, for example, tells an employee that he/she can have two weeks of vacation time and the employee hears that as being fourteen days that he/she can use at any point in a year. If the employer means for there to be limitations on when/how vacation days can be used, those limitations must be clearly communicated to the employee at the earliest possible time.

Also, the employer must communicate to the employee what the total value of the compensation package is. This may be done through the handbook but, more likely, would be done throughout the year by slipping a piece of paper in with the employee's pay check that outlines exactly what the cash value of all the non-cash compensation elements is.

c. A statement of the business's protocols and safety procedures.

This is incredibly important not only from a human resource management standpoint but also from a legal perspective. Agriculture is the second deadliest industry in the country. If you think there are not safety issues on your farm, look around. Consider how many of your employees have a strong background in your industry and then ask yourself how easy it might be for someone to get hurt. By outlining how important safety is to your business and then highlighting the dangers of your operation, you make a statement that you value safety and are committed to maintaining a safe work environment.

d. Lay out expectations, standards, and consequences.

What expectations do you have about professional courtesy or timeliness or animal welfare? What standards have you set for yourself and your family about the quality of work and of life? What consequences will be met if they do not keep with these expectations and consequences?

For almost every employer, there is something that they can refer to and say, "We don't do that here." Employees need to know what those things are before they learn the hard way. Some of those things might be intangible, like making a commitment to always respect your co-workers, and refrain from derogatory comments. Other aspects might be easy to define, like the business's policy on reckless behavior or animal cruelty.

3. Provide proper training.

If there is one area where agricultural employers frequently fall short, it is in new employee training and orientation. Many times, agricultural employers wait until the last minute, either out of necessity or design, before they hire a new employee. What this means is that the new person isn't always just thrown into the deep end of the pool to see if they can swim. They are sometimes thrown off of a cliff to see if they can fly.

Some new employees have no experience with businesses like yours. You may expect to hold that person's hand and give them some guidance for the first few days. The trouble is that a few days is not enough time. It takes thirty days for a new employee to be fully oriented into a business. It takes 365 days for an employee

to be fully trained – that meaning, a person has to see one full year of an operation before they can know exactly what can and will happen within a business.

Even employees who are, perhaps, experienced in the industry but are new to your business will need training and orientation. Just because a person has worked in a business like yours does not mean that there will not be things that he or she will have to learn about your business specifically. For example, why do employees never park on the south side of the barn? Why do you store those chemicals in that shed? Which place is the Frasier place? Every business speaks its own, individual, language. Be patient and thorough with people who are trying to learn to speak yours.

4. Meet the employee's needs.

One of the biggest mistakes an employer can make is to make a large investment of time or money to initiate compensation elements that his/her employees do not need or want. Successful compensation packages are really total rewards systems, containing non-monetary, direct, and indirect elements all based on the objectives of the employer and the needs of the employees.

Non-Monetary Compensation can include any benefit an employee receives from an employer or job that does not involve tangible value. This includes career and social rewards such as job security, flexible hours, and opportunity for growth, praise and recognition, task enjoyment, and friendships.

Direct Compensation is an employee's base wage. It can be an annual salary, hourly wage or any performance-based pay that an employee receives, such as profit-sharing bonuses.

Indirect Compensation is far more varied, including everything from legally required public protection programs such as Social Security to health insurance, retirement programs, paid leave, child care or housing.

Employers have a wide variety of compensation elements from which to choose. By combining many of these compensation alternatives, progressive managers can create compensation packages that are as individual as the employees who receive them.

Some indirect compensation elements are required by law: social security, unemployment and disability payments. Other indirect elements are up to the employer and can offer excellent ways to provide benefits to the employees and the employer as well. For example, a working mother may take a lower-paying job with flexible hours that will allow her to be home when her children get home from school. A recent graduate may be looking for stable work and also an affordable place to live. Both of these individuals have different needs and, therefore, would appreciate different compensation elements.

In a tight labor market, indirect compensation becomes increasingly important. Businesses that cannot compete with high cash wages can offer very individualized alternatives that meet the

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needs of the people you want to employ. Such creative compensation alternatives are the small business's competitive advantage.

5. Understand satisfaction.

Every employer should be concerned about how satisfied his or her employees are with their jobs. Unfortunately, that is something that is hard to quantify. A number of factors probably influence a person's satisfaction with his or her job. According to research by Hackman and Lawler, satisfaction hinges on four core dimensions – Feedback, Autonomy, Variety, and Task Identity (Lawler).

Feedback satisfaction hinges on the quantity and quality of job evaluation given to the employee by the owner or manager. It is also a function of the employee's access to job performance mechanisms (such as mortality rates or feed conversions) that have employee evaluation intrinsic in them (Lawler).

According to Lawler, "The job must allow a worker to feel personally responsible for a meaningful portion of his work." This sense of autonomy is measured by asking questions of the employees about their ownership of their work and the degree of authority they have over how they perform their tasks (Lawler).

Task Identity is defined as, "a very clear cycle of perceived closure and high visibility of the finished product." Task Identity relates to how employees perceive where the employee fits into the larger farm scheme (Lawler).

According to the Lawler literature, "High variety jobs typically tap a number of different skills that may be important to the employee." It is important to stress the element of challenge, not just difference when evaluating variety. If an employee performs different tasks that use the same skill sets and none of those tasks challenge the employee, that job, for that employee, is low on variety (Lawler).

So, as you consider how to better be the kind of boss that you would like to work for, consider the four core dimensions and try to arrange work schedules and responsibilities in a way that allows each of your employees to truly maximize his or her job satisfaction.

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Don't Miss the Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable IPM News

The *Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable IPM News* will be available mid-May for the 2006 growing season. The popular publication is a joint production of the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

The newsletter will contain fruit and vegetable pest monitoring information and alerts, pest management articles, guest author articles and articles on topics like biotechnology and specialty crops, nutritional benefits of fruits and vegetables, food safety, produce marketing, information on the benefits of integrated pest management and sustainable agriculture and much more.

The publication is funded by the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association through a partnership agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, Risk Management Agency.

If you are currently on the list for e-mail notification or on the hard-copy mailing list, you will continue to receive information in 2006. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or e-mail list for the 2006 season, contact Jean Ciborowski at 651-201-6217 or Jeanne.Ciborowski@state.mn.us. You can receive the newsletter via mail or you can receive an e-mail announcement and view the *Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable IPM News* in html or pdf format on-line. The newsletter will be available on the web on Friday afternoons from mid-May through August. Mailed copies will be sent out on Fridays.

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Resources available:

The following resources are available for purchase from the MFVGA. These manuals were prepared by the University of Minnesota Extension Service through partnership agreements with the USDA-Risk Management Agency.

The **Minnesota High Tunnel Production Manual for Commercial Growers** addresses issues including site selection and construction, layout, irrigation and water management, soil and plant fertility, disease management, insect management, crop production, basic economics of high tunnel production, organic production with high tunnels and information on where to find other resources.

The **Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Manual for the Beginning Grower** is designed for people who want to start growing fruits and vegetables to sell to other people and it contains basic information that growers should know BEFORE they start planting their crops. The manual includes sections on risk management, business planning and start-up, marketing, knowing your soil, production, irrigation and cultivation, farm safety, pest management, harvesting and storage. The manual also includes several farm profiles and a section on where to find more detailed information.

The **Minnesota Small Horticultural Farm Insect and Disease Diagnostic Key** includes pest and disease identification keys for individual fruit and vegetable crops. The key provides a series of plant symptoms and walks producers step by step through the diagnostic process.

All of the manuals are available from the MFVGA office for \$35.00 each which includes postage and handling. Please send your requests and payments to the MFVGA office at 15125 W. Vermillion Cir., NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304. Make the check payable to MFVGA.

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