

# MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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April 2009 Volume 23, No. 2

## A Note From The Board

Jim Birkholz  
Pleasant Valley Orchard

I write this in early March after a day of pruning in the orchard and yet another spill on the ice that lies hidden under our coating of snow. Not quite trusting the longer days that show a promise of spring, I find myself peering closely at pruned branches to make sure that the cambium layer and fruit spurs have survived what winter has delivered thus far. Looks like we'll have another chance to make a crop this year. It's hard to believe that in a short time high temperatures will be in the fifties and we will be pulling the straw off the strawberry fields.

It's a good time to check our preparation for the upcoming growing season. Did you acquire the additional knowledge this winter to stay on top of the growing game in 2009? One of the important things many members of the MFVGA did to stay knowledgeable was to attend the 56th Annual MFVGA Educational Conference and Trade Show in St. Cloud. In addition to the latest information on the specialty crops members grow, marketing sessions gave attendees ideas for selling what they grow at a profit.

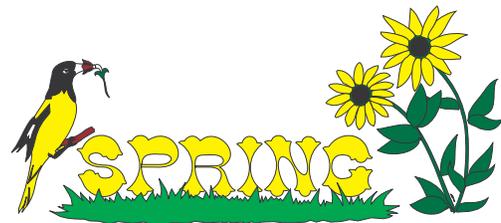
This year food safety and good agricultural practices received a special focus. With the latest processed peanut scare in the news, our customers will want more assurance than ever that we are growing and handling our crops in a responsible manner. The food safety training offered by our association in partnership with the USDA-RMA, the University of Minnesota and others is timely and shows the responsibility our grower members are taking for the future success of our industry. It's frustrating to think that Minnesota growers can come under greater scrutiny because of a bad actor in a peanut plant in Georgia. I hope that implementing good food safety practices on our farms and in our processing facilities along with the short supply lines of our locally grown products assures that we maintain the well being and trust of our valued customers.

For me, the ideas, contacts and information available at the annual conference more that offset the cost of registration and dues to belong to our association. I mention this because our membership is down somewhat from the past few years. If you know of growers who are not members of the MFVGA please take this opportunity to encourage them to become new members or to renew their membership. We can be most effective if all growers of specialty crops in Minnesota see fit to join and participate in the many activities of our association.

Speaking of being effective, how about the challenge of fixing the "Green Acres" property tax program? After poorly thought out

changes were passed by the legislature last year, over the objections of the MFVGA, your association updated its policy at the 2009 annual conference and charged back into the fray. Thanks to Frank Femling of Afton Apple for spending time at the legislature and testifying before committees on behalf of MFVGA members (reports are that Frank has, in fact, become quite a media star appearing several times on the public TV station that covers the legislature). In a nutshell, the MFVGA position is that the Green Acres program should continue to allow tax credits and deferments for agricultural land including cropland and conserving lands that are part of a farming operation. Look in your resolutions packet distributed at the annual meeting for more details on our association's position. It's too early to determine what the outcome for Green Acres will be this session. Suffice it to say that legislators know that the changes made last session are not acceptable. Proposals on the table include a one year moratorium, revisiting the tax status of conserving lands such as wetlands and woodlands, and adjustments to tax deferments. While it's a complex issue, MFVGA will continue to engage the legislature in cooperation with other agriculture organizations and the tax assessors to achieve a favorable outcome.

Wishing you a successful growing season in 2009!



## Dan Whitcomb Elected to MFVGA Board

The MFVGA membership elected Dan Whitcomb from JQ Fruit Farm in Princeton, MN to serve a three-year term on the Board of Directors. Dan replaces Cindy Femling from Afton Apple in Hastings, MN. Cindy, who served as the President of the Board during the past year, completed two terms on the Board and was not eligible for re-election this year.

Steve Poppe from Morris, MN completed his first three-year term on the Board and was re-elected to serve a second term.

The MFVGA Board also elected officers when it met in March. Officers elected to serve during the coming year by unanimous ballot are as follows: President – Annette Gilbertson from Gilbertson Farms, Scandia, MN; Vice-President – Jim Birkholz from Pleasant Valley Orchard in Shafer, MN; and Secretary-Treasurer – Matt Eisinger from Dehn's Garden, Inc. in Andover, MN.

## 2009 Proceedings Books Available

If you were unable to attend the 2009 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 \$15.00 each.

The *Proceedings Book* contains a variety of articles, outlines and copies of Power Point presentations for talks given at the educational conference. Some of the titles include

- Insect and Disease Pressure in Unsprayed Apple Orchards in Central Minnesota
- Developing a Fertility Plan for Asparagus
- High Tunnel Raspberry Research
- Good Agricultural Practices are Good Business
- Nutraceutical Crop Production in High Tunnels
- Identifying the Five Major Critical Control Points in High Tunnel Production
- Fertilizer Research in High Tunnels
- Fertility Management Strategies for Pumpkins
- New Herbicides for Sweet Corn Production
- And more!

To receive a copy of the 2009 *Proceedings*, send your check for \$15.00 (payable to MFVGA) to the MFVGA office at 15125 W. Vermillion Cir. NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304.



## Thank You, Cindy

Cindy Femling from Afton Apple in Hastings, MN recently completed her term on the MFVGA Board of Directors and we thank her for her dedication to the association and her many years of service through multiple terms on the Board. In addition to serving on the Board, Cindy sorts boxes of berry plants and produce bags. If you're picking up plants or bags this year, say "Thanks" to Frank and Cindy for the extra work they do on behalf of the MFVGA membership.

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.

## We Missed You

If you weren't able to attend the 2009 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference in January – WE MISSED YOU and you missed a great conference. We're already starting to plan the 2010 conference so put a note on your calendar now and join us for the 2010 Conference on Thursday and Friday, January 21 & 22, 2010 at the St. Cloud Civic Center.

## Midwest Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers Available

MFVGA has a limited supply of the *2009 Midwest Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers* available for \$10.00 each which includes shipping and handling. Please send your requests and payments to the MFVGA office at 15125 W. Vermillion Cir. NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304. Please make the check payable to "MFVGA".

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This issue of the MFVGA Newsletter is sponsored, in part, by the USDA – Risk Management Agency, Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program.

For more information on the Risk Management Agency visit their website at [www.rma.usda.gov](http://www.rma.usda.gov).

Information on the Farm Service Agency can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

# RESOLUTIONS

## MINNESOTA FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION 2009 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:**

1. Because pollution comes from many sources other than the farming sector, we oppose additional taxes on farm chemicals and fertilizers.
2. 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.
3. We support research and development of Best Management Practices for the greatest economic return and safe use of nitrogen products.
4. 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 and the continued expansion of the Minnesota Grown program.

**Resolutions continued on page 4**

**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.

**ADEQUATE LABOR SUPPLY:**

An adequate labor supply is essential to profitable fruit and vegetable production. We support immigration policies that allow farmers to have access to a steady, trained and legal work force.

**PROPERTY TAXES AND AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS:**

**Whereas**, the Minnesota Legislature has created the "Green Acres" program, the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program and the Minnesota Agricultural Land Preservation Program to help protect agricultural landowners from high property taxes that are caused by non-agricultural land development; and

**Whereas**, availability of fresh, locally grown agricultural crops, especially fruits and vegetables, are important for the health and welfare of Minnesotans; and

**Whereas**, tax incentives and land agricultural preservation programs are important to maintain the viability of agricultural land near population centers; and

**Whereas**, the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association believes that the Green Acres program should encourage farming operations to manage their land, owned or rented, as a unit including upland cropland, wetlands, woodlands, etc. and should offer incentives for conservation;

**Therefore, be it resolved** that the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association encourages the Minnesota Legislature to modify Green Acres as follows:

- Farmland should be eligible for 100% Green Acres tax credit/deferral when 80% of the acreage contributes to the production of crops.
- Land rented for agricultural production should be eligible for Green Acres, regardless of ownership.
- Non commercial land that is idle for natural environmental habitat should be eligible for Green Acres.
- Land not suited for development should be eligible for Green Acres regardless of titled ownership.
- Green Acres valuations for wetlands, woodlands, prairies and other conservation lands should always support public and private sector natural resource conservation investments and should encourage such lands to be retained as part of active farming operations.

**Food Safety Is More Than Just A Good Idea. . .**

. . . It's a good business practice as well. Over the last few years we've heard a lot about outbreaks of food borne illness from fresh fruits and vegetables. We can't eliminate all the food safety risks that come with fresh fruits and vegetables – they do grow outside in the soil and in the air – but there are practices we can use that help us reduce the risk for food borne illnesses. Those practices are called Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and one practice is to have a food safety plan.

Last year MFVGA, in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency and the University of Minnesota, funded the development of a food safety plan template and brought Betsy Bihn from the National GAPs Program, and Michele Schermann from the University of Minnesota, to the annual meeting to talk about food safety plans, how to make one, and what you can expect during a food safety audit. You may need a GAPs, or food safety, audit, if you have a corporate or institutional customer that requires it.

While you may not need to pass a GAPs audit, it's more than just a good idea to have a food safety plan for your farm. Half an acre or 50 acres, tree fruits or herbs -- a food safety plan and an audit covers only what is relevant for what you are doing. A food safety plan does have to be written down. But, if you have an employee training manual, you have the beginnings of your plan. More information about creating your food safety plan or how to get the template and workbook is available from Michele Schermann, 612-624-7444 or by e-mail at [scher019@umn.edu](mailto:scher019@umn.edu).

This summer you will have a chance to see what happens during an audit. Harley Olinske, from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Unit, will do two demonstration audits for MFVGA members and other interested growers. Harley will go through each step of an audit and talk about what he looks for in each area. He will also explain how and why he scored each section the way he did. This is your chance to see what an audit looks like and to ask any questions you may have about the audit process. The most recent audit score sheets can be found on the USDA Ag Marketing Service website: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateN&page=GAPGHPAuditVerificationProgram>.

**Volunteer needed.**

We are looking for a volunteer vegetable grower to host a demonstration audit. Are you willing to have Harley (and several of your fellow growers to observe the process) come to your farm to do a demonstration audit? There is no charge for you to have this demonstration audit done on your farm. If you would like to volunteer or have more questions, please contact Michele Schermann at 612-624-7444 or by e-mail [scher019@umn.edu](mailto:scher019@umn.edu).

More details about the demonstration audits – where, when, etc. will be included in the July issue of the MFVGA Newsletter.

# Peddling Your Pickles Safely?

Learn about the requirements of the Minnesota "Pickle Bill" legislation related to the sale of home processed / canned foods:



- pH meters & testing
- Recommended recipes
- Equipment
- Labeling
- Sanitation

April 23, 2009 – St. Paul, MN • June 3, 2009 – Rochester, MN  
Both workshops run from 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

## Directions:

### St. Paul

U of M Extension – Ramsey County

2220 White Bear Ave. N., St. Paul, MN 55109

One mile south of Hwy 36 at White Bear and Frost Avenues. At this intersection, turn east on Frost. Frost will "T" immediately. At the "T" turn left (north). Look for an old barn, complete with silos – office is housed in the barn. There is parking on the southwest side and on the east side of the building.

### Rochester

Heintz Center at the Rochester Community College/Regional Extension Office

Please pre-register by May 27, 2009. Specific directions will be sent to those who register for the workshop.

**Space is limited, register today!**

## Peddling Your Pickles Registration Form:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Other attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign up for:

April 23 - St. Paul \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$40.00 \_\_\_\_\_

June 3 - Rochester \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$40.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate method of payment:

Check (payable to MFVGA)  VISA  MASTERCARD

Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form with payment to:

**MFVGA**

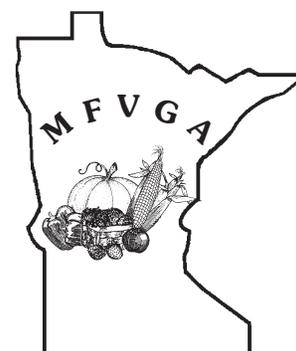
15125 W. Vermillion Cir. NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304

Instructors are University  
of Minnesota Extension  
Educators in Food Science.

**Sponsored by:**

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# Receive a Free Pest Management and Identification Pocket Guide!

By Vince Fritz, Roger Becker, Bill Hutchison, & Jim Jasinski  
University of Minnesota and Ohio State University

The Great Lakes Vegetable Working Group (GLVWG) wants to know what YOU think about pest management in sweet corn! The GLVWG is composed of nearly 150 university research and extension specialists who work in vegetable production in IL, IN, KY, MI, MN, NY, OH, Ontario, Canada, PA, and WI. This group is looking to understand the adoption patterns of pest management tactics of sweet corn growers over the entire region. The research is being conducted by Ohio State University in cooperation with the University of Minnesota. By completing this survey, you will help the working group identify future research and educational priorities in sweet corn production for Minnesota and trends throughout the region.

Although the survey is aimed primarily at fresh market growers who are 18 or older, processing growers are also encouraged to take it, though a few questions may not seem appropriate for that production system.

The survey is designed to be completed in about 15 minutes and is divided into 8 short sections, including educational, record keeping, and field oriented activities. There are no questions about annual sales, profitability, or other economic data. There is an opportunity after each section for input if you have comments or additional information to add.

Please know that this survey is voluntary and that any information given will be used to guide future IPM research and Extension program delivery. Your name, home address, or e-mail will not be asked for in this survey. Every effort will be made to protect your responses and your confidentiality. Any public reports of study findings will be based on grouped data and will not reveal individual responses. Results of this study may be used for publications, presentations, or shared with grower groups, industry, or agri-business.

**For the first 50 growers who complete the online survey in Minnesota, there is a code at the end of the survey which will allow you to receive a free copy of the just released "Sweet Corn Pest Management and Identification" pocket guide, a \$15 value. This guide contains 100 color pages of insect, weed, disease, and herbicide injury images plus horticultural guidelines. Without the code, you will not be eligible for a pocket guide.**

Please contact Deanne Nelson (507-835-3620) at the University of Minnesota concerning the sweet corn IPM survey and give her the code displayed at the end of the survey. She will then take your mailing address and send you the pocket guide.

Here is the link to the Sweet Corn Pest Management Survey:  
[http://www.surveymonkey.com.s.aspx?sm=NeTTF3Q19u2AAYGy3K5Xdw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com.s.aspx?sm=NeTTF3Q19u2AAYGy3K5Xdw_3d_3d)

We expect to have the results of this survey summarized by the fall of 2009, and posted on our website at <http://glvwg.ag.ohio-state.edu/>. If you would like more information about the survey, please contact Jim Jasinski, OSU Extension, 937-484-1526 or [Jasinski.4@osu.edu](mailto:Jasinski.4@osu.edu).

# MFVGA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION October 1, 2008 - September 30, 2009

Farm/Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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

### 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



### Minnesota Grown Directory is Largest Ever

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's 2009-10 *Minnesota Grown Directory* was being readied for printing as this article was written but we've already received enough listings to shatter the previous all-time high. The new *Directory* will include more than 710 farms and markets that sell directly to the end consumer.

The Minnesota Grown Program has been putting an increased emphasis on *Directory* distribution in outstate Minnesota. To help accomplish this, we are partnering with several media outlets who will be distributing a customized version of the *Directory* in their area. The result will be more directories distributed in rural Minnesota and greater consumer awareness of where to find locally grown products. We've agreed to partnerships with Pioneer Public TV based in Appleton, KAXE radio of Brainerd/Bemidji/Grand Rapids and WWJO 98 Country radio from St. Cloud, and KTTC-TV in Rochester.

To order copies of the new *Directory* for distribution, visit [www.minnesotagrown.com](http://www.minnesotagrown.com) or contact Brian Erickson at 651-201-6539.

### New Cost Share for Retail Sampling

Minnesota Grown has worked with the Minnesota Apple Growers Association for several years to offer a retail sampling cost share program for MAGA members who wish to sample their apples in grocery stores. That program is still available but we've added a similar opportunity for other Minnesota Grown products, including produce, wine, cheese and any other Minnesota Grown item that could be sampled in a retail grocery store, restaurant or liquor store. We can reimburse you for half the fees associated with the

sampling event (except for the cost of the product being sampled). You must be a Minnesota Grown member to participate and you must be signed up for the cost share program before sampling can begin. Contact Paul Hugunin at 651-201-6510 or by e-mail at [paul.hugunin@state.mn.us](mailto:paul.hugunin@state.mn.us) for details.

### Include the logo on your printed labels, boxes, bags or tags

We'll provide a one-time reimbursement up to \$200 just for adding the Minnesota Grown logo to your packaging! Be sure to contact Paul before you start designing your new packaging. Don't have permanent packing for your product? We can provide up to \$200 toward adding the logo to your delivery truck, bags, or permanent road sign.

### Use the FREE Marketing Materials

Minnesota Grown stickers, price cards, twist ties and more are all FREE as long as you remain licensed to use the Minnesota Grown logo. There is no limit on quantities – we simply ask that you put the items to good use and that they only be used on items that you have grown or raised.

Did you know that grocery stores, restaurants, co-ops, and other accounts you sell to can also receive the free marketing materials? You can provide them with items when you deliver your products or they can order their own directly by using the "retailer" section of [www.minnesotagrown.com](http://www.minnesotagrown.com). Retailers and wholesale distributors are allowed to use the logo and marketing materials without purchasing a Minnesota Grown labeling license. The next time you call on your wholesale accounts, be sure to show them samples of what they can use to help promote your product.

*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.*



### NOTICE TO NON-MEMBERS

**In return for receiving the MFVGA newsletter, we ask a \$10 donation per year to cover printing and mailing costs.**

**Thank You!**

#### PLEASE NOTE:

**If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, please let us know.**



**Dr. Cindy Tong**

Dept. of Horticultural Science  
University of Minnesota

First there was 'Honeycrisp', released by the University of Minnesota in 1991. Then there was 'Zestar!®', released in 1998. Now we have 'Frostbite™', 'SnowSweet®', and 'SweeTango™'. What do all those ™ and ® symbols mean? They mean that these varieties are protected under the U.S. Plant Patent Act and by Plant Breeders Rights in several other countries. Nurseries must be licensed to propagate and sell trees of these varieties. The University invests approximately \$400,000 per year in its apple-breeding program, including David Bedford's salary (somebody has to make those crosses and decide which special trees should be kept), field staff to help maintain the trees (somebody has to prune, spray, and harvest trees), plot space (orchard land has to be paid for), research costs (we have to pay to have some tests done), supplies and equipment. Only about a quarter of the cost, \$100,000, comes from state funds (your tax dollars). More than half of the program was funded by royalties generated from University intellectual property, primarily 'Honeycrisp'. However, the trademark on Honeycrisp has expired, meaning that the University of Minnesota will no longer have exclusive rights to that variety. Royalties on planting of Honeycrisp trees will stop, and the University will lose that income stream. Because most Minnesota apple orchards grow and sell apples from the Minnesota apple breeding project, this could doom future releases. Where would cold-hardy apple varieties come from? There aren't very many publicly-funded apple breeding programs left in the United States.

The other recent releases, SnowSweet®, Zestar!®, and Frostbite™, are non-managed public varieties that will be freely available to anyone who wishes to plant them. SweeTango™, the results of a cross between Honeycrisp and Zestar!, on the other hand, is a "club" variety, meaning that it was licensed to one private group, Next Big Thing Cooperative (see [http://www.sweetango.com/sweetango\\_growers.htm](http://www.sweetango.com/sweetango_growers.htm)). This was done to maintain uniform quality on all fruit sold wholesale, so that it retains its premium price. If 'SweeTango™' is successful, the licensing

agreement will also provide continued funding for the apple breeding program, which is even more important in these times of dwindling federal and state support. A special licensing agreement will make 'MN 1914', the trees that produce 'SweeTango™' fruit, available to Minnesota apple orchards selling retail. Those orchards agreeing to plant between 100 and 1,000 trees will receive a sublicense to grow and sell 'MN 1914' in their own retail outlets. Minnesota is not unusual in licensing apple varieties. Ambrosia is a club variety that was bred in British Columbia. Its propagation and/or sale is prohibited without the consent of the Okanagan Plant Improvement Company. Jazz™ is a club variety, the result of a cross between Royal Gala and Braeburn, licensed by the New Zealand ENZA program to The Oppenheimer Group.

There is some concern among scientists that perhaps those of us at publicly-funded institutions should not perform research on proprietary or club varieties. Happily, this is not a problem for Minnesota researchers with 'SweeTango™' because the licensing agreement allows Minnesota growers selling retail to plant 'MN 1914' trees and sell the fruit. Preliminary data we have collected suggests that consumers will like 'SweeTango™'. In collaboration with Zata Vickers and Katie Baures, in the Department of Food Science and Nutrition at the "U", we asked consumers to taste and judge 'SweeTango™' apples from four different harvest dates. We thought that the first two harvest dates were pretty starchy (average starch indices of 3 and 4 on the Cornell scale), and that consumers wouldn't like the fruit, but we were wrong! Panelists liked the fruit regardless of harvest date, starch index or firmness. By the last harvest date, average firmness was down to about 12.5 lbs., which would be unacceptable to some wholesalers. We plan to do more consumer taste tests at farmers' markets and supermarkets in 2009. One of the things we'd like to know is how much of a premium consumers are willing to pay for locally-grown fruit and for a new variety. Other preliminary data suggests that the fruit store fairly well after three months in refrigerated air. Firmness and soluble sugars do not change much compared to freshly-harvested fruit, and no weird storage disorders appeared, even at 32° F. This is good news for Minnesota apple growers and consumers!

# Financial Incentives for Pollinator Conservation

By Eric Mader

Pollinator Outreach Coordinator,  
The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation  
Adjunct Associate Extension Professor, University of Minnesota  
Department of Entomology

You might be surprised to learn that a number of financial incentive programs are now available to growers who are interested in setting aside some of their land for pollinator habitat.

In Minnesota these are USDA programs, administered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which provide cost-sharing for the establishment of flowering plants to support bee populations when your crops are not in bloom. These types of conservation efforts are increasingly important for the health of native bees which can serve as an insurance policy against ongoing honey bee declines.

Historically, these programs were intended to reduce erosion, protect water quality, and provide habitat for wildlife such as pheasants and whitetail deer. The new 2008 Farm Bill and recent rule-making within the USDA, however, has made the promotion and conservation of pollinator habitat a priority. This is great news for growers who depend upon bee pollination for the production of their crops.

Among these programs are the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), both of which are actively and increasingly being used for bee conservation efforts by fruit and vegetable growers across the country.

Typically, pollinator projects funded by these programs involve the creation of flowering hedgerows, or designated “bee pastures” consisting of native wildflowers. In addition to building a large resident population of wild bees, these sorts of habitat improvements provide refuge for other beneficial insects, and depending on their design can incorporate other conservation purposes including serving as shelterbelts, filter strips, or even orchard floor cover crops.

The value of these types of habitat improvements on resident wild bee populations is real and well documented. One recent

study found that squash farms in New Jersey received sufficient pollination entirely by native bees in areas adjacent to natural habitat. A similar study on canola (which requires even more intensive bee coverage than tree fruits) demonstrated that in the absence of honey bees, growers could make more money through increased pollination when 30% of the overall land area was maintained as wild bee habitat.

Further evidence of the value in habitat projects to conserve native pollinators can be seen in Michigan where the NRCS recently launched an effort to enroll 2,500 acres of land in wildflower plantings throughout the state’s western fruit growing region. Participating landowners there receive annual rental payments for plots of land as small as two acres under the Conservation Reserve State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Program. In many cases, marginal areas of land such as fencerows, field borders, and ditches even qualify.

The multi-function conservation value of these projects, combined with their documented ability to produce wild bees, makes real economic sense as honey bees continue to be in short supply. For specific program details and opportunities to conserve bees on your farm, contact your local NRCS service center.

Finally, my organization, The Xerces Society, is the nation’s leading non-profit organization devoted specifically to the conservation of invertebrates such as insects. Some readers may recognize Xerces from our publications like *Farming for Bees*, and the *Pollinator Conservation Handbook*, as well as regular presentations at regional events such as the annual MOSES Conference.

In my role as Pollinator Outreach Coordinator, I work closely with government agencies and private landowners to raise awareness about the value of native bees, and to train agricultural professionals in pollinator conservation techniques. A new Xerces partnership with the University of Minnesota’s Department of Entomology allows us to provide more direct support to growers throughout the state.

If you would like technical support for native bee conservation, more information about the Xerces Society, or free downloads of our many publications and fact sheets, please visit our website at: [www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org)

# Agricultural Alternatives: Developing a Roadside Farm Market

(Taken from a publication developed by the Small-scale and Part-time Farming Project at Penn State with support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Extension Service. Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, Agricultural Research and Cooperative Extension. [agalternatives.aers.psu.edu](http://agalternatives.aers.psu.edu))

Prepared by James W. Dunn, professor of agricultural economics, John W. Berry, extension educator in Lehigh County, Lynn Kime, senior extension associate in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, R. Matthew Harsh, extension educator in Adams County, and Jayson K. Harper, professor of agricultural economics.

Many agricultural products can be sold directly to the public through a roadside market. Retailing directly to consumers can be a viable alternative marketing strategy and means of increasing profits for many small-scale agricultural ventures. However, marketing your crop through a roadside market requires a great deal of planning and the thorough examination of a wide range of issues. This publication will discuss many of these issues, and raise many pertinent questions that a would-be roadside marketer should consider. Following these steps and guidelines will not guarantee a successful roadside market. However, they will start you on your way to a new, and possibly profitable, alternative market. Many producers who have started direct marketing credit that decision with their success.

## **Research**

As with any new business venture, research is the first step in developing a roadside market. You should explore your potential competition, customers, and products. For more information on starting a new business venture please see *Agricultural Alternatives: Starting or Diversifying an Agricultural Business*.

For starters, you must think about what would encourage a customer to stop at your roadside market. Many customers would prefer to buy local products (if the market is convenient and they believe they are getting good value) and repeat customers are essential for success. A clean, attractive market will attract customers and enhance the marketing opportunity. Therefore, the market must provide the customer with a combination of quality, service, and value that will encourage them to come back. An important thing to consider is why a customer should come to you instead of going to their local grocery store.

Does significant competition currently exist in your local area? If so, how will you compete? How will you differentiate your market and products from other food outlets? Remember, competition will come from more than just other roadside stands – consider consumer trends in the wider world and how they may impact your operation. Consider using a framework (many good examples exist in business texts and on the Internet) to categorize and analyze your competition, and identify how you will compete.

Who will be your target customers? Consider the demographic profile of your local area – do your target customers exist locally? Will you target local customers, or people passing through your area? Population statistics and demographic information can be very helpful in researching customers. Such information can be found on the Internet or through your local library. For more

information on researching your local market please see *Agricultural Alternatives: Fruit and Vegetable Marketing for Small-scale and Part-time Growers*.

What products will you grow to sell at your market? What is your expertise, and how does it match up with what you think your target customer will want? Remember, quality will likely be the main concern for many of the customers who will shop at your market. Consider selling a wide variety of items, since offering shoppers a wider selection of products is likely to generate higher sales-per-customer. It is a good idea to develop a plan including a production schedule, estimates of costs and yields, and time commitments for the crops you will grow or value-added products you will produce.

If you can not produce all the items you wish to sell at your roadside market, consider supplementing your market offerings by purchasing produce from other local growers. Another option may be to form a marketing cooperative among a group of growers to operate a roadside market. Such an arrangement can help spread risks and costs and take advantage of the different strengths of individual producers. For more information on agricultural cooperatives, please see *Agricultural Alternatives: Cooperatives*.

## **Regulations**

There are many regulations related to operating any small business and a roadside market is no exception. Most states have small business development centers that offer publications and workshops outlining these regulations. Potential regulations you may have to deal with include: worker's compensation, unemployment compensation, building inspections, weights and measures, plant pest laws, sales tax, and perhaps others. State departments of agriculture will also have publications that will help you understand and satisfy these regulations. A list of some of these publications and web sites may be found at the end of this publication. Depending on the zoning regulations in your area, permits may be required for driveways or entrances to a business; check with local officials or your local state highway office before beginning construction. Also check with your local municipality to determine if building/occupancy permits are required for a roadside market, and how any existing zoning regulations may affect your plans. Also, in many areas, permits are required before erecting any roadside signs.

## **Location**

Location is one of the most important considerations when developing a roadside market. Spend time observing traffic flows in the vicinity of your potential market location. What type and volume of traffic flows past the site? Is your location on or near a major travel route? Will the market be visible from the road? Will drivers have enough time to slow down to enter the site? Is there clear visibility for cars entering and leaving traffic? Markets located along high traffic routes are easier for customers to find, will likely require less signage, and often benefit from significant "drive-by" business. Conversely, a market located in an out-of-the-way location on a secondary road will be harder for customers to find, will require additional signage to properly direct customers, and will need to be positioned as a "destination" in the minds of customers.

**Roadside Market** continued on page 11

## Roadside Market continued from page 10

Distance from your point of production is another important consideration. How easy will it be for you to get your products to the roadside market? If possible, locating the market near your farm will reinforce to customers that they are getting fresh product. If your farmstead is clean and tidy, it will also serve as great advertising.

### Size

If you are constructing a new building or remodeling an existing structure, you should think ahead to future expansion. Don't build more than is necessary, but also try not to box your market in with too little space. Will your market be a small, seasonal affair or a larger, year-round provider of produce and specialty food items? The size of your operation will define your costs and your revenues. Do you have the managerial ability to operate both the sales and production aspects of your farm business? If you are selling, who will handle or supervise the production and harvest of your crops? Conversely, would it be a better use of resources for you to concentrate on production and hire someone to oversee sales? Markets of many sizes exist and prosper – the initial and eventual size of your market should be a part of your overall business plan. For more information about developing your business plan, please see *Agricultural Alternatives: Developing a Business Plan*.

### Roadside Signs

No matter how nice your market looks, people must be able to find it. Signs directing the customer to the market should be attractive, eye-catching, and easy to read from a distance. It is less important to list all available products on the sign than to direct the customer to the market. Signs should be visible far enough in advance to give the customer adequate time to decide to stop at the market and to safely enter the parking area. Be sure to check with your local municipal authorities for any regulations regarding roadside signs.

### Parking

To draw customers to your market, the parking area and exterior of the market must be clean, attractive, and inviting. There should be ample parking for customers and the parking lot should be easy to navigate. Handicapped parking and accessibility points should also be provided – keep this in mind when planning your site and constructing any buildings. Ideally, the parking lot should be paved and marked with lined spaces. Gravel lots are also acceptable, but bear in mind that loose gravel can be difficult to walk on (particularly for the young and old), and is often quite dusty during extended dry periods. Once the customers are in the parking lot, signs listing products and directional arrows guiding them to the market entrance need to be attractive, easy to read, and simple to follow.

### Establishing an attractive market

Large displays of fresh produce create a unique shopping environment and are likely to increase product sales. Shoppers are more likely to form a positive impression of your market if products are high quality, clean, and nicely displayed. Remember that high quality products are the strength of produce markets!

Give a lot of consideration to the design of displays in your market. You can enhance your displays by using contrasting colors, shapes, and sizes. Appeal to your customers' sense of smell by using

aromatic herbs and fruits. Consider combining soft, firm, smooth, and fuzzy items. Stimulating your customers' senses creates a positive purchase environment and helps increase sales. Make displays that look like they came from the farm. Wooden crates, boxes, and baskets work well. Where possible, slant displays towards the customer. Even an attractive table cloth can add to sales. Stair-stepped displays create an array of depth, color and texture; however, they may not be easy for the customer to reach or easy to restock. Utilize vertical space by hanging products from slings or hangers.

Remember, roadside markets are often selling an image and experience as well as physical products. When shopping in such an environment, you want your customers to think about traditional agriculture and the many "warm" thoughts that this implies. Old tools, crates, or scales hung on the walls can reinforce this impression. Similarly, pictures showing earlier days on the farm can help "sell the story" of your farm. If it is a family market, consider putting up a picture of the family.

### Merchandising

"Pile it high and kiss it good-bye!" is a common theory for selling produce. Full, well-stocked displays make customers want to "come and get it." No one likes taking the last of something from a bare, picked-over display. A wide variety of produce conveys abundance, prosperity, and quality. Do not overstock or crush tender items on the bottom of displays, but try to keep displays fresh and full at all times. For most products, avoid piling them higher than six to eight inches as they might bruise or tumble. Avoid steep pyramid-shaped displays where products continuously roll off the top. Make displays attractive, while at the same time trying not to create "picture perfect" displays that customers will hesitate to disrupt by removing produce. In some cases, removing a few items from a display may actually entice customers to start buying.

Make it easy for the customers to reach the produce. Your display should be no more than an arm's reach in depth, and between knee and eye level in height. Avoid placing merchandise on the floor or ground. Instead of placing boxes flat on tables, try slanting them to make a more visually appealing display, and give easier access.

Organize products in related groups. Groups might include dessert items, salad items, cooking vegetables, apples and pears, etc. Displaying compatible products together serves to suggest additional purchases and uses of these products.

Place high demand items in strategic, high-traffic locations throughout the market. Large displays attract attention, so use bulk displays to generate sales, especially for high-volume seasonal crops such as apples or corn.

Use color and texture to enhance eye appeal. For example, mix a row of radishes between the mustard and kale, tomatoes between the lettuce and cucumbers, or intersperse peaches with blueberries to create dazzling color displays.

*Good color groupings:*

- Red and yellow or green
- Light green with yellow or purple
- Dark green with red, orange, or yellow

**Roadside Market continued on page 12**

## Roadside Market continued from page 11

Creative touches can enliven a produce display. Carrot wheels, fresh flower bouquets, garden like groupings of lettuce and greens, baskets in displays, or hand stacked yams are just a few examples. Providing salad dressings, sauces, vegetable dips, or dry mixes used for produce will also add to the display and promote greater sales. If you don't have a wide variety of produce items, consider creating a color mixture with flowers or signs to make your displays more visually appealing. Seasonal themes, such as fall squash and yam displays or summer berries, work well on dry tables.

### Price Signs

Prices should be clearly marked on or near displays. Many modern shoppers are in a hurry and will be reluctant to ask for help to find out how much something costs.

Restock displays frequently; rotate products as needed; and remove damaged, decayed, or un-saleable items promptly. Unightly produce left on display not only detracts from sales, but may also leave customers with the impression that you do not sell quality produce. A good rule of thumb is this: If you would buy it, leave it; if not, pull it out.

### Seasonality

A unique challenge of seasonal businesses is that they often have to remind their customers when it is time to resume shopping with them. The shorter the season, the more challenging this can be. Many roadside markets try to extend their selling season for this reason. They do this by having something to sell before their prime sales period, which is usually the late summer. Having vegetable or bedding plants or seeds to sell in the spring can start the year off earlier. Flowers can be a nice early-season product that can continue through the year. Having other fruits or vegetables that are targeted for the early summer may help. Some markets buy produce from other regions to broaden product lines and extend the season. A particular challenge comes when bad weather ruins the crop. It may be worthwhile to buy produce from somewhere else rather than having your customers buy elsewhere. They may never come back.

### How to keep your customers coming back

Roadside markets sell produce, and if it weren't for the people buying the vegetables, there wouldn't be a roadside market. Simply put, customers keep you in business. *Always remember this*, and act accordingly.

### Present the market and yourself well

Keep everything tidy and clean. Know what you're selling and keep displays well stocked. Treat your customers like invited guests. Salespeople should wear clean and appropriate clothing and be approachable. Consider providing employees with matching apparel or aprons with the farm name on them to promote a unified, consistent appearance. Remember, your market employees will be dealing directly with customers; an unfriendly appearance or rude attitude will cost you customers and sales.

It is likely that customers will return to your market for not only the quality produce, but the superior customer service as well. Customer service can be a significant point of differentiation between your roadside market and a big grocery store. Take it on yourself to give your customers the same level of customer service you would like to receive, and train your employees to do likewise.

### Listen to your customers

If customers suggest that you could do something better, want something you don't have, or want information about something you sell, do your best to accommodate them. Within reason, take the extra effort to give customers what they want. Talk to them about their question, and give their suggestions and requests due consideration.

### Educate the consumer

Customers may not know how to use a product or what product will be best for what purpose – a knowledgeable suggestion will be most appreciated. Suggest something they may not have tried. Having recipes available can be very helpful; a successful meal will win a long-term customer.

### Be Nice

Employees should be friendly and courteous. Many customers shop at roadside markets for superior quality and to support local producers. They will be reinforced in this judgment if the person serving them is someone they know and like. Get to know frequent customers by name. Always greet customers with a smile and a "hello." Customers are not a distraction, they are the reason you are in business. Make your market a place that customers enjoy visiting.

### Complaints

No matter what you do, you will always have some complaints. Many times, when a customer makes a criticism, it's because they want to keep shopping at your market, but they want something to be improved. So listen, remain calm, address the customer's concerns, and take their comments to heart. Perhaps their complaint is evidence of something that could be done better.

### The 10 Keys to Customer Service

1. Customers are never an interruption to your work. The customer is your real reason for being in business. Chores can wait.
2. Greet every customer with a friendly smile. Customers are people and they like friendly contact. They usually return it.
3. Call customers by name. Make a game of learning customer's names. See how many you can remember.
4. Remember, you and your employees are the face of the company. The way you represent yourself to your customer is the way your business will be perceived by that customer.
5. Never argue with customers. The customer is always right (in his or her eyes). Be a good listener; agree where you can, and do what you can to make the customer happy.
6. Never say "I don't know." If you don't know the answer to a question, say "That's a good question. I will try to find an answer for you."
7. Remember, every dollar you earn comes from the customer's pockets. Treat them like the boss.
8. State things in a positive way. It takes practice, but will help you become a better communicator.
9. Try to give your customers a good experience at your market so they will want to come back.
10. Always go that extra mile! Do just a little more than the customer expects.

Roadside Market continued on page 13

## Staffing

It is important to have the market run by personable, hard-working people; they are your face to the public. Employees should be well-trained and have a clear understanding of their job responsibilities. Develop an employee work schedule that takes into account peak and off-peak times for sales at the market. Plan to have sufficient staff on hand to avoid being overrun by customers during peak shopping times.

## Record Keeping

Your record keeping practices will be one of the keys to the success of your market. Keep accurate records of what you produce, sell, and discard. These records will need to include the cost of production, selling price, and marketing expense. Accurate records can be used to establish break-even prices, determine profitability, and aid in planning production for future seasons. Records will help you analyze your business and make sound decisions. Are certain products selling well enough to justify their space in your market? How late should you be staying open? In order to make a good decision, you need to analyze the best data available; keeping good records is critical to the success of your business.

## Advertising

Although advertising is expensive, if done properly and strategically, it is certainly worthwhile. Often ads on radio and local cable television and in newspapers are surprisingly affordable. Advertising is an investment that will pay you dividends in attracting customers to your market.

Be strategic about your advertising. Choose mediums and outlets that appeal to your target customers. Talk with advertising salespeople about the demographics of their audience and geographic distribution – does it fit your target customer profile? If your operation is only open seasonally, it is unlikely that you'll need to advertise throughout the entire year. You may find that you only need to advertise at the beginning of the season to let customers know that you have reopened. If you are offering new products, your current customers will want to know about them. Advertising new products may entice new customers to your market as well.

Never underestimate the power of word of mouth advertising. Satisfied customers that feel a connection to your market and its products will undoubtedly be your best form of advertising.

## For Additional Information

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Kohl, R.L. and Uhl, J.N. (2001). *Marketing of Agricultural Products (9th Edition)*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Starting a Business in Pennsylvania: A Beginner's Guide. Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. REV-588 PO (04-02) (available online)

## Web Sites

Agricultural Marketing <http://agmarketing.extension.psu.edu> and <http://lehigh.extension.psu.edu/Agriculture/market.html>

Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers. <http://www.pasbdc.org/default.asp>

State Small Business Resources. <http://www.thinkinglike.com/State-by-State-Business-Resources.html>

USDA Direct Marketing Bibliography. [http://www.ams.usda.gov/directmarketing/b\\_6.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/directmarketing/b_6.htm)

## Additional Exhibitors at the 2009 Trade Show

The following organizations signed up to exhibit at the 2009 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show after the February 2009 issue of the MFVGA Newsletter was printed. We wish to thank all of the exhibitors who participated in the trade show on January 22 & 23, 2009 in St. Cloud, MN. Detailed information on the rest of the exhibitors was included in the February 2009 issue of the MFVGA Newsletter.

### Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources – Waters

Joe Richter – 651-259-5703  
500 Lafayette Road  
Box 32  
St. Paul, MN 55155

*DNR Waters administers the state programs that monitor the water levels of aquifers, lakes and streams. In support of these programs, a state permit is required for the use of more than 10,000 gallons in a day or one million gallons in a year. Permit holders are required to measure and report the amount of water they use. This information is used to manage water during droughts.*

### Sustainable Farming Assn. of Minnesota

Crow River Chapter  
Jerry Ford – 320-543-3394  
7616 25th St. SW  
Howard Lake, MN 55349

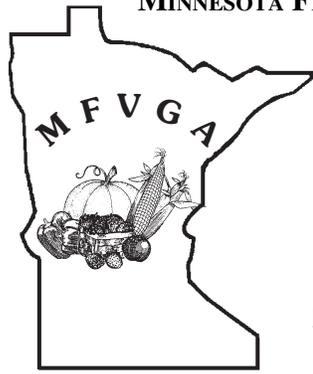
*The Sustainable Farming Association supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education and farmer-to-farmer networking.*

## MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

c/o Marilyn Nysetvold Johnson, Exec. Coordinator  
15125 W. Vermillion Cir. NE  
Ham Lake, MN 55304  
Phone: 763-434-0400  
Fax: 763-413-9585  
E-mail: [mfvga@msn.com](mailto:mfvga@msn.com)  
[www.mfvga.org](http://www.mfvga.org)

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### “Thank You” to our Conference Sponsors & Supporters

A number of our exhibitors as well as other businesses and associations helped to support the 2009 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference and the Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association by contributing dollars to offset our cost of providing refreshments in the trade show area and by helping to defray other costs associated with the conference. Their contributions and support help us provide high quality programming for growers at a reasonable price. Please join us in thanking the following companies and associations for their sponsorship and support of this year’s conference:

Agro-K Corporation  
AgStar Financial Services  
Central Minnesota Vegetable Growers Association  
Farm Service Agency  
G.W. Allen Nursery, Ltd.  
Mid-States Supply, Inc.  
Nourse Farms, Inc.  
Putnam Plastics  
Syngenta Seeds

We give a special “Thank You” to the **USDA – Risk Management Agency, Community Outreach and Partnership Program** for providing dollars through a partnership agreement that helped to offset a variety of conference and promotional expenses.



### Note from the President

Greetings from your new MFVGA President, Annette Gilbertson from Gilbertson Farms in Scandia, MN. It was really great to see so many of you at the January conference in St. Cloud. I certainly enjoyed all the visiting, classes and trade show.

It looks like Spring is just around the corner. Wishing everyone a great start to spring! If you have any questions or comments, let us know. You can contact the MFVGA office or contact me at [gilbertsongilbey@aol.com](mailto:gilbertsongilbey@aol.com).

HAPPY SPRING!!

Annette



### Mark Your Calendar:

#### **Peddling Your Pickles Safely Workshops**

April 23, 2009 – St. Paul, MN

June 3, 2009 – Rochester, MN

(See details on page 5.)

#### **GAPs Audits**

Details on the demonstration audit will be in the July newsletter. (See page 4.)

#### **Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show**

January 21 & 22, 2010

St. Cloud Civic Center – St. Cloud, MN