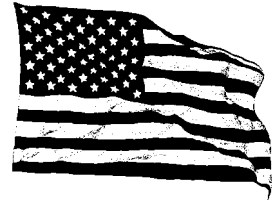


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July, 2006 Volume 20, No. 3

A Note From The Board

Steve Poppe – Steve’s Strawberries, Morris, MN

Hi from the newest elected board member of the MFVGA. It is an honor to serve on this organization. I have been an MFVGA member since 1986 and a member of the North American Strawberry Growers Association since 1999. This is my chance to serve members of this group and repay the organization for the numerous years of great educational information.

Besides being owner and operator of Steve’s Strawberries in Morris, MN, my primary occupation is a Horticulture Scientist with the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) in Morris, MN. Our group has succeeded in creating a regionally recognized public research garden. We offer an aesthetically-pleasing public garden, where interested gardeners can learn and share ideas, and where students can work and learn about plants and the environment.

Our largest annual educational event at our Research Center is Horticulture Night. It has become the WCROC’s premier community event, attracting over 1,400 visitors. It is held the last Thursday in July from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. Visitors participate in walking tours of horticulture research and display gardens and enjoy special landscape and garden demonstrations. In addition to tours and displays, young and old can enjoy dozens of fun, hands-on activities. Vendors participate in a horticulture trade show to keep visitors updated on the latest plant materials, garden supplies, landscaping and lawn care products, equipment and available services.

My research interests are:

- The annual flower variety trial is the major focus of the WCROC research gardens. I’m the lead person on this coordinated trial with WCROC, North Central Research and Outreach Center, Grand Rapids, MN, and St. Paul Campus. Our data and cultivar recommendations are shared with amateur and commercial bedding plant growers in Minnesota.
- Collaborator with a regional trial for advanced selections of landscape plants
- Trial site for Natural Resources Conservation Service plant materials trial
- Cooperative evaluation of herbaceous perennials, chrysanthemums and hardy shrub roses for winter hardiness, flowering and garden performance
- Cooperative evaluation of recommended ornamental grasses for cold climates
- Principal investigator, “Wool Mulching Systems for Specialty Crops,” “Annual Bed Strawberry Production System for

Minnesota,” and “Wool and Canola Mulch for Strawberry Weed Control”

- Cooperative evaluation of strawberry cultivars and selections to determine adaptation to Minnesota conditions of recently introduced cultivars and elite selections from the UM-USDA breeding program.
- University of Minnesota Children’s Garden. We develop educational programs, plant mobile, summer and fall tours, field days, design, planning, and coordination of educational gardens. And we are developing a primary school education program centered on the concept of The Pizza Garden. Our goal is to teach children the important role that plants play in our daily lives.

Strawberry Research Projects:

Wool Mulch Strawberry Experiment Funding provided by Agricultural Utilization Research Institute

For several years we have been growing strawberries using a weed-deterrent wool landscape fabric.

In May of the planting year the fabric is cut into strips and centered over the prospective strawberry rows. Slits are cut in the wool mulch to transplant the dormant strawberry plants in each row.

Data has shown the wool mulch treatments have consistently provided more growth the first year, which is an indication of higher strawberry productivity for the following growing season. We’ve also been successful in reducing weed pressure and eliminating the use of herbicides in the strawberry row the first year.

U of M Agro-K Strawberry Experiment Funded by Agro-K Corporation, Minneapolis, MN

This trial was planted in the spring of 2005. We are following a fertility program of using foliar products that are certified for organic farming practices in strawberries. These products claim to unlock valuable nutrients already present in soil and how they create a natural balance in plant systems. This enables the plant to efficiently and naturally improve vigor, production and/or quality.

The plot design is a randomized complete block design with three replications. We are growing two different varieties of June-bearing strawberries with soil applied fertilizers, herbicide applications, tillage, and hand weeding. Four different treatments will include applying Agro-K products and no Agro-K products and the use of fungicide spray applications and no fungicides.

Note from Board continued on page 2

Aqua Innovations Oxygenated Water System Strawberry Experiment

Funded by Aqua Innovations Company, Bloomington, MN

In this strawberry experiment certain irrigation modifications were made within each treatment to control what type of water was applied to the plant row. These two types of water were WCROC well water and WCROC well water run through an Aqua Innovations oxygenated water system. This patented process creates 100% pure oxygen from the water. This oxygenated system accelerates nutrient uptake and better root growth in plants.

Annual Strawberry/Wool Mulch Production System Funded by Minnesota Department of Agriculture

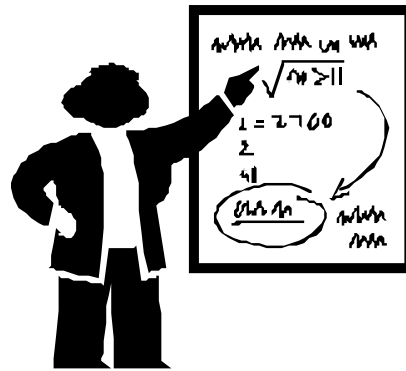
In 2004 the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute and Minnesota sheep producers teamed up with Mat, Inc. of Floodwood, MN to produce a new wool mulch similar to the original wool mulching material, but lighter in weight and density. The new product is less expensive — about one-fourth the cost of the original wool mulch.

We planted strawberry plants or plugs on August 15, 2005. The new wool mulch fabric was applied over the top of the strawberry planting immediately after planting. This practice will suppress weed emergence and conserve moisture. This will also eliminate the need for any herbicides used in the fall and next spring. All experimental treatments were grown on semi-raised beds three to four inches high. Planting during this non-traditional time in the late summer directs vegetative growth into branch crowns, which produce flowers for next year, instead of runners. Late summer planting also avoids the heat, drought, and weed and disease pressure of early and mid-summer.

Data conclusions will be available after the 2006 growing season.



ANNOUNCING:



Worker Protection Standard Training Opportunities

Motivation, Education and Training, Inc. (MET) in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture will be conducting Worker Protection Standard (WPS) pesticide safety training for workers and handlers. MET is a private non-profit organization that provides academic and vocational training to migrant and seasonal farm workers.

MET staff will be contacting groups of farm, nursery and greenhouse workers to schedule training sessions. The goal is to provide WPS training to as many workers as possible before they enter the fields or pesticide treated areas.

- The training will be provided in Spanish or English.
- The training will be provided at no cost to the employee or the employer.
- The training will be for workers but handler training can be done if requested.

Workers and handlers that have completed the WPS pesticide safety training conducted by MET will be given a **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Verification Card** as documentation of the training. As an employer you can ask to see your employee's or potential employee's verification card to ensure the training has been completed. The date of the training is included on all verification cards. WPS pesticide safety training is required once every five (5) years.

An employee's participation in the MET conducted WPS pesticide safety training removes the responsibility from the employer to provide the training. However, the employer is still required to be in compliance with WPS and to show employees the location of the central location, the pesticide label (MSDS) information and decontamination sites and who to contact in case of pesticide related illness or injury.

MET offices are located within or near Minnesota Job Service offices.

To schedule a training session for your employees contact:

Miguel Cantu, MET, Moorhead 218/299-7262
Ana Castillo, MET, Owatonna 507/446-1472
Steve Poncin, MN Dept of Agriculture 651/201-6136

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.

MFVGA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

October 1, 2005 - September 30, 2006

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-gusiness 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

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 Questions? Call 763-434-0400

It's Not Too Late to Renew Membership

Even though the new MFVGA membership year begins October 1, 2006, there's a good reason to renew your MFVGA membership for the current year if you haven't already done so.

A partnership agreement with the USDA-Risk Management Agency has allowed us to provide MFVGA direct members (commercial fruit and vegetable producers) with copies of the *2006 Midwest Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers* and the *Midwest Small Fruit Pest Management Handbook*.

These are valuable resources for commercial fruit and vegetable growers. Send your membership application or membership renewal in today and make sure you indicate the crops you grow so we can provide the materials that best fit your operation. We have limited quantities available, so renew your membership today.

2006 Proceedings Books Available

The 2006 Proceedings Book contains information from many of the talks given at the 2006 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers 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 Book, send your check for \$17.00 (payable to MFVGA) to the MFVGA office at 15125 W. Vermillion Cir., NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (Voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



This issue of the MFVGA Newsletter is sponsored, in part, by the USDA – Risk Management Agency.

For more information on the Risk Management Agency visit their website at www.rma.usda.gov.

Information on the Farm Service Agency can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov.



Grown. The free Minnesota Grown stickers, price cards, posters, and buttons help your products stand out and give a colorful, professional appearance to your displays. You can still order stickers the “regular” way with the paper order forms or save yourself a stamp and order them on-line at www.minnesotagrown.com Just scroll down to the “Producer and Licensing Information” section to place your request immediately. All of our point-of-sale items are free to producers who are licensed to use the Minnesota Grown logo. If you aren’t licensed, give either Brian or Paul a call or print the license application from the web site.

Watch for Minnesota Olympian in New Ads

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. Carrie is featured prominently on the back outside cover of the 2006 Directory and on the web site. Look for Carrie to appear in a new ad promoting farmers’ markets that will begin airing in July. As the year progresses, we will try to incorporate Carrie into as many of our ads as possible.

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 as she trains for the 2008 Olympics that will be held in China.

Television Campaign Underway

Minnesota Grown ads have started airing on KMSP (Ch 9) and UPN (Ch 29) as part of our 2006 advertising campaign. 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 have 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 promotion. The Official Meteorologist program has already been used this season to announce the opening weekends of the Minneapolis Farmers’ Market and St. Paul Farmers’ Market. Upcoming Official Meteorologist segments will promote strawberries (mid-June) and blueberries (early July).

MN Grown continued on page 5

Interest in Buying Locally Continues to Grow

There’s no doubt that a growing number of consumers care about where their food comes from and are seeking ways to increase the amount of locally grown products they purchase. Traffic to the Minnesota Grown website (www.minnesotagrown.com) continues to increase steadily and significantly each month. The number of “unique visitors” to the site from Jan.-May of 2006 is up 82% compared to the same period of 2005 and has increased a whopping 136% compared to 2004 figures. We’re currently on pace to approach 30,000 unique visitors for the year. And that’s just to the www.minnesotagrown.com site, we also have thousands of visitors who go directly to the Minnesota Grown page on the MDA’s web site.

At the same time more and more people are searching the Directory on-line, requests for the printed Directory have also increased. Although 2006 isn’t even half over as this article is written, we’ve already shipped well over 140,000 copies – more than 80% of the 170,000 copies printed. How do these printed copies get into the hands of your customers? A quick review of miscellaneous phone calls and e-mails in the past 2-3 days gives a flavor of how these books are distributed. We received a call from a real estate agent who is giving the Directories to her clients, a note from a colleague who received a copy of the Directory from the “Welcome Wagon” person, a call from a woman who read about the Directory in her local church bulletin (this church has a membership of over 3,000 families!) and the usual orders from Travel Information Centers, libraries and producers who are listed in the book. If demand for printed copies continues to rise, we may need to increase our 2007 print order – again! It wasn’t that long ago that we were happy to distribute 75,000 copies per year and now we have that many ordered before we’ve finished final edits.

At the recent Living Green Expo (held in May at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds) the Minnesota Grown Program distributed over 2,500 copies of the brand new 2006 Minnesota Grown Directory. Our new spokesperson, Carrie Tollefson, joined us in the booth for a couple of hours to sign autographs and help distribute the new Directories. The positive comments and reactions were very encouraging to hear!

Don’t Forget the Minnesota Grown Stickers and Price Cards!

Whether you market directly to consumers or through grocery stores, make sure customers can easily recognize your product as Minnesota

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.



Dr. Cindy Tong
Dept. of Horticultural Science
University of Minnesota

New Diagnostic Tools

Since the last time I wrote about diagnostic tools in the April 2003 MFVGA Newsletter, new tools have become available. You may already be familiar with the Berry Diagnostics Tool developed by Dr. Marvin Pritts (see <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/department/faculty/pritts/BerryDoc/Berrydoc.htm>). If you're a strawberry or apple grower, then you probably have the field guides developed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) for identifying insect pests, diseases, and beneficial organisms. If you don't have these guides and want copies, see <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/ipm/strawberryfg/> or <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/ipm/applefg/>, or contact Jeanne Ciborowski at the MDA at 651-201-6217 or jeanne.ciborowski@state.mn.us.

Cornell University has a plant pathogen site for vegetables, available at <http://vegetablemndonline.ppath.cornell.edu/>. You can obtain fact sheets on various diseases for different vegetable crops. Click on the seed packet representing a crop, and you get a list of all the different diseases for which the site has a fact sheet. The problem is that you have to know what disease your crop has in order to access the information. What if you don't know the name of the disease?

If you're growing currants or gooseberries, then you can check out http://www.ars.usda.gov/mainsite_main.htm?modecode=53581500 which was developed by Dr. Kim Hummer and Joseph Postman of

the USDA/ARS National Clonal Germplasm Repository in Corvallis, Oregon. At this website, you can look through the lists of cane and stem symptoms, leaf symptoms, or flower and fruit symptoms, click on the symptom you see in your crop, and get information on what pathogen is causing the symptom. Sometimes you will get a page listing another choice of symptoms before you get to the information on the disease organism.

The vegetable diagnostics tool developed by the University of Minnesota Extension Service with the MFVGA and the USDA-Risk Management Agency is available at <http://smfarm.coafes.umn.edu/> (the Beginning Grower's manual is also available at this website). Click on **Insect and Disease Diagnostic Key**. This takes you to a page listing various crops. Click on the name of a crop, and you get a list of symptoms. Click on the symptom, and you get a **possible** cause of the symptom and sometimes a picture of the symptom. As time goes on, we plan to add more symptoms and causal organisms to the lists. A hardcopy version of this tool is available from MFVGA (contact Marilyn Nysetvold Johnson).

Before she left for Purdue University, Janna Beckerman developed a Plant Disease Diagnostics webpage, mainly for yards and gardens. The page can be found at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/projects/yardandgarden/diagnostics/>. Click on the picture of a host plant (the site includes fruits, vegetables, turf, trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials, houseplants and herbs), and you get a new list of hosts. Click on a specific host, and you get to choose between leaf, fruit, or root symptoms. For example, if you choose *vegetables*, then *cucurbit*, then *fruit*, you get a page with pictures of different symptoms. Click on a symptom picture, and you get descriptive information on the symptom and the cause of the symptom.

Why are so many diagnostic tools available only on the Internet? The Internet allows us to update and easily add information. Revising bulky manuals is costly, so revision occurs infrequently. If you don't have Internet access at home, you may be able to access these diagnostic tools at your local or regional Extension office or library.

MN Grown continued from page 4

The Minnesota Grown Program also worked with the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association to air over \$20,000 of ads promoting GardenMinnesota.com on KSTP (ch. 5) this spring. GardenMinnesota.com provides consumers with landscaping and gardening tips and links them to landscaping professionals. The Minnesota Grown Directory is a featured link on the website. The station has also started a gardening/landscaping tips segment in their midday news program twice each week through October.

Are You Ready for Some Cheese Curds?

That's right – the Minnesota State Fair is right around the corner! Here's your chance to promote your industry, meet potential new customers and enjoy a day at the fair. Just a single four-hour shift at the booth will earn free admission tickets and a free t-shirt, hat or visor. Contact Paul to sign up for your shift. We're also looking for

items to display in the booth so fairgoers can see some of the wonderful products grown right here in Minnesota. Contact Marilyn if you can help by donating product for the display.

New Phone and Fax Numbers

If you haven't already done so, make sure you've got the updated phone numbers for any MDA staff that you might need to contact. The agency moved from our longtime home on Plato Boulevard to a new building near the Capitol in December.

The new fax number for Ag Marketing Services: 651-201-6114
Paul Hugunin: 651-201-6510
Brian Erickson: 651-201-6539
Ruth White: 651-201-6494

Farm and Ranch Personnel Management

By James M. McGrann, Professor and Extension Economist, The Texas A & M University System; Fred DeLano, Extension Agricultural Economist, Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service; and Dean McCorkle, Extension Economist – Risk Management, The Texas A & M University System.

(Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Publication RM8-1.0 (12-98). Taken from the Ag Risk Management Library.)

People – human capital – are an important resource in making a farm or ranch business more competitive in today's business environment. With participatory management there are opportunities to realize the potential of human capital. This publication summarizes ideas about modern personnel management that illustrate ways to attain a farm's or ranch's business goals through its people.

Management Styles

The old command-and-control management style is fading and is being replaced by a participatory management approach that involves everyone in defining objectives, making decisions and being accountable. Better trained personnel, performance measurement, improved information systems, and two-way communication are critical if all personnel are to be involved and responsible. Owners and managers need to take the responsibility for fostering employee participation rather than simply giving orders and then checking to see if the job was done. Walk-around management and two-way communication show respect for the ideas of all employees and are part of successful personnel management. Implementing participatory management also requires the sharing of written goals, strategies, financial data, and production performance information. Tying reward systems to strategies and improved performance is part of the participatory management style. Reducing the levels and number of "commanders" may also reduce costs and improve employee satisfaction.

A change in management style requires a major change in philosophy. New skills must be developed or a change in the people at the top of the organization may be required. Communication and performance evaluation systems must be developed to achieve a change in personnel management philosophy.

Management by objectives and rewarding performance is much more achievable if everyone participates in defining goals and objectives and being accountable for both their own and collective efforts. All efforts toward participatory personnel management begin with all employees knowing their job responsibilities, the goals and objectives of the business, and how to work as a team.

Changing Management Style

Production agriculture has been and is still dominated by the command-and-control management style. Many employees find this style convenient. If things go wrong "it's the manager's fault." They would rather not be accountable for their actions. On the other hand, as the ranch manager's responsibilities broaden, employees must be expected to do their own thinking. It does not make sense for managers to try to be everywhere and to make all decisions. The leadership role is more important. Communication,

participation, and performance analysis must replace the command-and-control style. Most people want to make a difference and performance needs to be quantified and measured when it happens.

Owners must initiate a change in management style. They must motivate participation. They must begin to identify and employ workers who respond to the participatory style. Again, the communication of goals and sharing of financial and performance objectives becomes the motivation. In many situations the current "commander" must be replaced or retrained. A change in management style often must be facilitated by an outside professional who can train and motivate employees and who does not have a vested interest in changing working relationships.

Modifying the reward system, enhancing communication, and providing support with an effective management information system can facilitate the management style transition. The sooner an organization makes the commitment to change, the sooner the benefits can be achieved.

Job Description

Employee participation is enhanced by developing written job descriptions that clearly define responsibilities, the basis for measuring performance and the reward system that recognizes varying levels of achievement. A commitment toward continued training and sharing of training costs needs to be spelled out to all personnel as part of their job descriptions. Expectations that employees will work toward being good team members also should be spelled out in job descriptions. This reinforces the philosophy that there is a mutual dependence required to accomplish individual job and overall business objectives.

Job descriptions are also helpful in identifying and hiring employees, especially when developed through a participatory effort and closely tied to business strategies.

Team Efforts

Although most farms and ranches have too few employees to justify forming several teams, they can benefit from owners, managers and employees working as a team. In the words of Katzenbach and Smith the reason to use a team or group approach is that "teams outperform individuals acting alone especially when performance requires multiple skills, judgment and experience." The key to successful team efforts summarized from Katzenbach and Smith are the following:

1. There is group agreement on a common purpose – established urgency and direction.
2. Measurable performance goals are established.
3. A defined working approach to accomplish tasks is followed.
4. Holding each employee mutually accountable for results benefits all involved.

There must be measurable performance goals for employees. Participants need to be rewarded for achievements through the efforts of the team. The team leader is a facilitator and is not expected to have all the answers. The purpose of the team is to be more effective than an individual. Even small teams in a farm/ranch environment can practice participatory decision making and motivate participants to a higher level of achievement.

Management continued on page 7

Taking Care of Employees

In today's farm/ranch management environment, it is challenging to be the operations manager and be responsible for working through employees to see that everything is done correctly and effectively, while also completing other objectives. Too many times managers spend time doing the jobs that someone can be hired to do at the minimum wage rate and letting critical marketing and financial management decisions go undone.

Employees cannot be neglected. Successful management begins with employee considerations. The best trained and most motivated personnel often do not stay in agriculture. This makes participatory management even more valuable. Continued training, employee reward systems, benefit packages and living conditions that make a ranch job as favorable as possible will pay off in employee retention. The total employee "family" must be part of the "package." Often it's the spouse and children and their education that have to be part of the total package. The high cost of maintaining employees means they have to be efficient and effective in their jobs. Training and reward systems cannot be neglected.

Temporary Service

The high cost of permanent employees has encouraged hiring specialized help by outsourcing specific jobs. Day labor is common for peak seasonal activities such as custom pesticide and fertilizer application and custom hay harvest. When evaluating the benefit of out-sourcing these services, the cost of full-time employees and the associated personnel management cost have to be of primary concern.

One of the advantages of temporary employees and services is that it's easier to get out of the arrangement if the job is not done correctly. Just as in the service and manufacturing business, expect temporary service or out-sourcing to be increasingly important in meeting personnel needs.

Employee Training

To ensure that employees have and maintain the necessary skills to perform their duties, continuing education and training have to be an ongoing part of the employee management and maintenance package. Employees should be rewarded for a job well done and encouraged to explore and learn new and more efficient ways of performing their jobs. Greater access to education and information through computer systems will have to become part of the new rural working environment.

Selecting and Terminating Employees

Two of the most difficult tasks of personnel management are selecting and terminating employees. Too often ranchers keep employees who do not meet the job requirements because the task of letting them go and hiring and training new employees seems too difficult. The cost of keeping an incompetent employee is not only the cash outlay but also the cost of opportunities lost or the recurring cost of correcting problems because the job is not being done correctly.

The whole hiring and dismissal process is more effectively accomplished if the job description, performance evaluation, and mission

and objectives are clearly communicated. Employees need feedback to know how they are doing and what needs to be changed. Both managers and employees need objectively measured performance results. Documented underachievement can make it clear when termination is required. This information also helps in the selection of replacements.

The job description and performance analysis should communicate the expectations that ongoing training is the responsibility of all employees. Many farm/ranch owners and managers could join together to encourage private and public offerings of continuing education and training opportunities. Managers, professionals and other top employees of the farm/ranch must stimulate and encourage continuing education and training efforts.

It is hard to expect high performance and continued improvements if the "human capital" is not growing in capability and expectations.

Leadership

No area of personnel management is more important than the leadership ability of the farm/ranch owner(s) or top manager. Few operations can justify having a specialized chief executive officer (CEO) whose primary responsibility is business leadership. The normal owner-manager or manager must be both a leader and an operations manager. Leaders make sure that employees are doing the right thing. Leadership is about effectiveness and results. Managers make sure that things are done right. Management is about efficiency.

The business leader must provide vision, face reality, and communicate reality and direction to the business participants. Leaders identify with the "customer's needs," ensuring that the farm or ranch is "customer" focused.

Important functions of leaders in personnel management are impressing upon employees that they are capable, and empowering them to maximize their capabilities. This cannot be accomplished with the command-and-control management philosophy.

Leaders must generate and sustain trust to gain employees' following. Business leaders must develop employees who can identify problems and assist them in finding solutions. Leaders must motivate employees to achieve excellence in everything they do. Leaders also need to be decisive and timely in decision making when dealing with employees. Loyalty that is built among employees will carry through to customers. For successful business leaders, experience, competency, and a commitment to life-long learning have never been more important.

Communications – Using Outside Professionals

It is common in any business for problems to arise between employees and management. Bringing in an outside professional who understands farm/ranch personnel management and general ranch production, marketing and financial issues can facilitate better communications by identifying opportunities for improvement. Experienced outsiders, without a vested interest, can identify employee-manager situations that require change. They can listen to employees' frustrations and communicate alternatives for

improvement in a manner that is objective and that protects employees. An outside professional can communicate reality without worrying about job security, as might be the case if an employee were to communicate the same information. Another advantage in using experienced outsiders is that they can communicate findings and solutions from other businesses that will help the business being evaluated. This information is often difficult to acquire, as owners and managers tend to protect the type of information that might reflect their shortcomings.

Business Plan and Execution

Personnel management must center on a well-developed business plan that clearly defines management philosophy, goals and performance analysis procedures that monitor accountability and achievements. The focus must be on execution. All must understand that it is not the strategy that makes for success, it is the execution - getting it done, getting it done right and getting it done on time. Leader tenacity is a virtue that is most important in achieving desired results.

Conclusion

For a farm or ranch to be competitive, there is no more important activity than personnel management. Modern management style focuses on the participatory involvement of all employees and helps them reach their full potential. The participatory management style can lead the business to greater competitiveness through its people – the most valuable resource for the lasting success of the business.

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Items Needed for State Fair Display

We are looking for fresh produce and other products or processed items that can be used in the Minnesota Grown display at the 2006 Minnesota State Fair. We are looking for a wide range of items that showcase the variety and quality of locally grown fruits and vegetables – items that are available from growers like you across the state.

If you are willing to donate fresh produce or other items, please call Marilyn at the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400 or e-mail mfvga@msn.com. If you would like to volunteer for a four-hour shift at the booth, call Paul Hugunin at 651-201-6510. There are three four-hour shifts each day during the fair. The State Fair runs from August 24th through Labor Day.

First Annual Minnesota Garlic Festival

The First Annual Minnesota Garlic Festival will be held Saturday, August 12, 2006, from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., at the Wright County Fairgrounds in Howard Lake, Minnesota. Howard Lake is located 45 miles west of Minneapolis on U.S. Highway 12.

Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children.

The inaugural Minnesota Garlic Festival is the premiere event for lovers of garlic and good times. Family friendly, fun-filled and fragrant, this festival features local foods, chefs, music, artisans, games and competitions, all promoting a healthy environment and vital rural communities.

There are over 100 varieties of gourmet garlic grown right here in Minnesota, all planted in October and harvested in July, and several growers from across the state will introduce their fresh 2006 garlic at this event. As well as being wonderfully tasty, garlic is documented as one of the healthiest foods you can eat.


A performance stage will feature a wide variety of musical entertainment, including Papa John Kolstad and the Hot Club of East Lake; kid's performer Will Hale; the Garlic Diva, Kitty Karn; Marianne Kreitlow, composer of the top garlic hits "I Like Garlic" and "The Vampire Song"; Bella Voce's medieval music with a twist; and the Mu Community Taiko Drummers. The Garlic Dragon will tour the grounds, Dracula will make an appearance and there will be games for the kids.

Limited space is still available for vendors, artists, restaurants, chefs, environmental/conservation groups, and community organizations. Contact Mary Schmidt, 320-485-3562, saam@tds.net.

Learn more at: www.sfa-mn.org/pages/garlicfest

The festival is sponsored by the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, which has received a grant from the Central Minnesota Initiative Foundation and is sponsored by Citizens State Bank, Bridge of Harmony, Taralan Crop Consultants, and several other generous sponsors.

For more information, contact Jerry Ford, 320-543-3394 or jerry@marienne.com.



**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.

Plan Your Irrigation Scheduling with Daily Crop "ET"

Jerry Wright, University of Minnesota Extension Service
(Reprinted from the *MN Fruit & Vegetable IPM News*, Vol. 3, Issue 5)

Daily crop ET information can be used by Minnesota irrigators to help plan irrigation scheduling. This information is currently available for the 2006 season and can be easily obtained from the internet by one of the web pages listed below or by contacting one of the following local ET service providers:

Minnesota & Wisconsin (reference) Crop ET at:
www.soils.wisc.edu/wimnext/

East Ottertail County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)
218-346-4260

Hubbard County SWCD
218-732-0121

Sherburne County SWCD at:
www.sherburneswcd.org/
763-241-1170

U of M – West Central Research & Outreach Center, Morris, MN
320-589-1711

North Dakota Ag Weather & Crop ET at: www.ndawn.ndsu.nodak.edu

The Minnesota and Wisconsin ET web page presents daily colored coded maps each day of the week, and it displays a reasonable estimation of the potential ET value across the state based on the actual weather conditions of that day. Potential ET values are very similar to the actual daily crop ET when a crop is at full canopy.

The daily values from the web site can also be sent directly to a user by e-mail each day for a given field site within the map area if requested over the web site.

To estimate the daily ET value for a crop before full canopy or near maturity the ET value must be taken times a crop coefficient (Kco) constant that may range from .25 to 1.0 depending on the growth stage of the specific crop. Generally, for annual crops, the correction factor starts out around .25 and increases to 1.0 or greater as the plant nears full canopy and then holds this Kco value until the plant starts to mature. As a crop matures, some crop types will have their actual ET decrease slightly each day as they come to maturity, hence the crop correction factor will go from 1.0 to maybe as low as .40 as the leaves senesce and reach maturity. Crop coefficients for specific crops can be obtained from Jerry Wright, Extension Engineer at jwright@umn.edu.

Keeping track of the crop's daily ET use and regular in-field soil moisture checking can go a long ways in helping an operator optimize the crop's growth while reducing the potential for leaching of some crop inputs like nitrogen into the groundwater.

These daily ET values best serve the user if recorded down on a calendar log like an irrigation checkbook worksheet or computer spreadsheet for quick reference when making your irrigation decisions. Consider assigning the updating task to one of the younger members of your family.

Irrigation checkbook spreadsheets can be found on the University of Minnesota Extension website at www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/cropsystems/DC1322.html or one can purchase a computerized spreadsheet version of the checkbook for \$35 from the WCROC office at Morris. An alternative version of a checkbook spreadsheet can be also downloaded from the Wisconsin ET website.

For more information on how to use daily crop ET information, contact Jerry Wright, Extension Engineer at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, MN at 320-589-1711 or jwright@umn.edu or your local Extension or SWCD office.

Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable IPM News

The *Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable IPM News* is back for 2006 to alert growers and processors of pest outbreaks and timely management recommendations. When relevant, the newsletter also provides newsworthy topics related to biotechnology and specialty crops, nutritional benefits of fruits & vegetables, food safety, marketing and articles of broad interest.

The newsletter is a partnership between the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, MFVGA and the USDA-Risk Management Agency. The newsletter is available online at <http://www.vegedge.umn.edu> (htm format) or www.mda.state.mn.us/ipm/ipmnews (pdf format).

To get on the mailing list for a hardcopy of the newsletter, contact Jeanne Ciborowski at 651-201-6217 or jeanne.ciborowski@state.mn.us.

MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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