

MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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October, 2006 Volume 20, No. 4

A Note From The Board

Marilyn Johnson, Executive Coordinator

I was recently working on the membership renewal information and deciding what to highlight when Jimmy Stewart and "It's a Wonderful Life" popped into my head. I don't know why. It did get me thinking, though.

What if there wasn't a Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association? What if producers and Extension specialists didn't form the Minnesota Vegetable Growers Association in the 1950's? What if a group of berry growers hadn't joined together? What if the two groups hadn't merged? What difference would that make? How would growers today be impacted if there wasn't an MFVGA?

To start with the obvious, you wouldn't be reading this newsletter. There wouldn't be annual educational conferences or trade shows because there wouldn't have been an organization to coordinate and promote the event. There wouldn't be workshops and field days or organized events for growers to socialize and share experiences.

Over the years substantial research on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices has been done by the University of Minnesota. Much of that research was sponsored by MFVGA and funded by the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute. What if MFVGA wasn't there to sponsor the research? Would the U of M have found another association to sponsor the work or would it have meant no IPM research was done? Out of those initial projects through AURI's Pesticide Reduction Options program came the VegEdge website and the *Minnesota Vegetable IPM Newsletter*. That later became the current *Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable IPM News*.

The use of high tunnel production has become very popular in the Midwest. The initial high tunnel research done in northern Minnesota was funded through MFVGA and dollars received from the USDA Specialty Crops Fund. Research results and recommendations were compiled into a production manual funded by the USDA Risk Management Agency. That manual is now in its third printing. More in-depth sessions on high tunnel production as well as sessions for producers considering high tunnel production have been included in the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference. Additional workshops have been presented by the University of Minnesota Extension Service throughout Minnesota. Have you attended any of those sessions or workshops? Have you purchased a manual? Have you benefited from that information?

These are just a couple of examples of how your membership strengthens partnerships that benefit producers throughout the region. Some of those partnerships are obvious – the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the Minnesota Department of

Agriculture. Many additional projects in recent years have been possible because of funding provided through partnership agreements with the USDA Risk Management Agency.

Those partnerships have provided

- Expanded programming for the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference
- Farm Transfer / Estate Planning Workshop
- "Pickle Bill" Food Processing Workshop
- Beginning Grower Workshop
- Dynamic Farmers' Market Conferences
- *MN Fruit & Vegetable IPM News*
- *Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Manual for the Beginning Grower*
- *Minnesota High Tunnel Production Manual for Commercial Growers*
- On-line Vegetable Diagnostic Tool (<http://smfarm.coafes.umn.edu/diagnostic.htm>)
- *Nutrient Management for Commercial Fruit and Vegetable Crops in Minnesota*
- *Integrated Pest Management: A Risk Management Framework to Improve Decision-making*

Other projects have included the distribution of practical resources and the updating of the MFVGA website.

Your membership ensured representation on a Task Force to discuss and suggest improvements to the University of Minnesota's plant variety release procedures and policy.

Your membership helps support berry research through the group order of strawberry and raspberry plants. MFVGA's continued interest and involvement in berry research in northern Minnesota helped convince the University of Minnesota to continue the work Dave Wildung has done in Grand Rapids. As many of you know, Dave will soon be retiring, but his work with small fruit, tree fruit, vegetable, flower and ornamental crop studies will continue.

Your membership helped develop the Minnesota Grown bags. Your membership was instrumental in getting the Special Local Needs Registration for Stinger use on strawberries in Minnesota.

MFVGA has made a difference. Your membership in MFVGA makes a difference. Each and every individual and farm who is a member or associate member of MFVGA makes this organization and these partnerships stronger. The future and the programs that can be offered depends on you, the members of MFVGA.

With your help and commitment, MFVGA will continue to make a difference. Membership dues haven't changed for several years and those dues represent a small investment with a huge pay-off. Join or renew today.

NAP Sign Up Dates

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) sign up dates for 2007 are approaching. The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) NAP program provides financial assistance to eligible producers affected by natural disasters. This federally funded program covers noninsurable crop losses and planting prevented by disasters. An eligible producer is a landowner, tenant or sharecropper who shares in the risk of producing an eligible crop.

For more information and sign up dates for your crops, contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or go to FSA's website at www.fsa.usda.gov.

Are you "Peddling Your Pickles Safely?"

The "Peddling Your Pickles Safely" workshops are for people interested in processing and selling their home-canned foods at local farmers' markets. The "Pickle Bill," as passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 2004, has very specific requirements for products that can be sold.

These workshops will address the following "Pickle Bill" questions:

- What food safety issues are critical from harvest to processing?
- What is the Pickle Bill legislation?
- What types of home canned foods meet the requirements?
- Can your kitchen pass inspection on sanitation?
- What is acceptable home food processing and equipment?
- How do I select and document recipes?
- How do I label my product?
- What are the acid levels of vegetables, fruits and pickled products?
- How do I use a pH meter for testing? What types of meters are there?
- How do I calibrate a pH meter? How do I test my product?

These are important questions and each person who is selling home processed products must have current and accurate information on these topics. Regional Extension Educators in Food Science will be conducting the workshops.

Two workshops are planned. The first will be held February 5, 2007 at the St. Cloud Civic Center, the day before the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show. The second is planned for late March in the Twin Cities. Additional information and a registration form will be included in the December MFVGA newsletter. A brochure with complete information on the March workshop will be mailed in February. Information will also be posted on the MFVGA website at www.mfvga.org. If you have any questions, please contact Marilyn Johnson at 763-434-0400.

The workshops are sponsored by the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the USDA-Risk Management Agency. These institutions are equal opportunity providers.

Radio Program Covers Topics Ranging From Flax To Yaks

Innovative series marks its sixth month on the air

St. Paul, MN. Minnesota farmers are sharing stories about everything from growing flax to raising yaks thanks to a radio series that recently marked its six month anniversary on rural airways.

The weekly radio program is the result of a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Farmers' Union, and Minnesota Farm Network. "Our goal is to help farmers inspire each other with their success stories and insights," said Meg Moynihan, MDA agricultural specialist. Moynihan coordinates the Ag Opportunities on the Air program on behalf of the department.


While the weekly topics may vary, the programs all share a common theme, highlighting Minnesota farmers' creativity and ingenuity. Topics include producing ethanol from barley, raising flax, saving soil with strip tillage, direct marketing, growing Christmas trees, and raising alternative livestock species such as yak or heritage turkeys.

"Diversifying farms and farmscapes is an important part of keeping our agricultural economy healthy and vibrant," said Moynihan. "This show is one way farmers can share marketing strategies, conservation practices, and opportunities for value-added products."

This series is produced with funds provided to the MDA by the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.

To listen to any of the broadcasts or read show transcripts, visit the MDA's web site at www.mda.state.mn.us/mgo (see the right side of the screen and click on "Ag Opportunities on the Air"). The web site also provides links to additional information and resources about each of the radio topics.

To suggest topics for future programs, call Meg Moynihan at 651-201-6616.



**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.

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.

New IPM Publication Series for Growers, Processors, Crop Consultants & Extension Educators

By Bill Hutchison, Dept. of Entomology, University of Minnesota

Is IPM Too Risky?

A new IPM Series sets out to answer this question by applying key economic and decision-making principles to Integrated Pest Management (IPM), as a Concept and Practice, and by illustrating the risk management benefits of IPM using three case studies. *IPM: a Risk Management Framework to Improve Decision-Making*, introduces an economic risk management perspective to IPM, including the need to better understand the Risk Perceptions and attitudes of IPM Audiences (e.g., growers, crop consultants), and methods for measuring risk. These publications, with specific research-based examples (currently for three high-value horticultural crops), should be useful for Communicating the Value of IPM to individual growers and processors, and/or as an educational tool at grower meetings.

Publication:

"IPM: A Risk Management Framework to Improve Decision-Making" (2006).

Publication # 08229, University of Minnesota Extension Service, St. Paul, MN

The series presently includes three two-page, color fact sheets (case studies), subtitled: "IPM and the bottom line," including:

- Fresh-market Cabbage: Increasing Economic Returns While Reducing Risk
- Sweet Corn: Value and Risk of IPM for European corn borer
- Wine Grapes in the Midwest: Reducing the Risk of the Multi-colored Asian Lady Beetle

There are several ways to view and/or order the publications. Free, single copies of each of the 2-page fact sheets are available to download (PDF format) at the Minnesota Extension Service Web site (below). Additional packets of the 2-page fact sheets (25 each; for \$18.75 U.S.) can also be ordered for grower/consultant meetings; these packets also include one copy of the Risk Management Framework publication. A "web-sampler" of each publication, and all related information is available at the Minnesota Extension Service web site: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG8229.html>. You can also order this publication by calling the Minnesota Extension Service Distribution Center at 612-624-4900 or 800-876-8636.

The series was produced in cooperation with Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota (Dr. Terry Hurley) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Dr. Paul Mitchell). Each publication includes several color photographs and figures to illustrate key points about economic returns as well as economic risks involved with IPM and conventional systems. Extension Educators and IPM Coordinators should find these useful for educational meetings in their respective states. This new series was funded by the USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) and the Minnesota IPM Program (USDA-CSREES), and developed in cooperation with the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, the Midwest Food Processors Association, the MDA IPM Program, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, and the NC Regional IPM Center (USDA-CSREES).

MFVGA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION October 1, 2006 - September 30, 2007

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

U of M GLEANINGS

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

It's the end of another growing season, and hopefully you made some money despite the hot, dry July. Do you know what crops were profitable, and which ones weren't? Before you start planning your winter vacation, you might want to sit down and assess the past season. Easy to do if you had written records, but who has time to do this?!

If you don't already have your own recordkeeping system, there are two systems that I know of that will help you keep records so you don't have to start from scratch. One system, devised by Dan Kaplan, who runs a 500-member community supported farm in Amherst, relies on Excel spreadsheets. You start by figuring out what kind of yield per 350-foot row of a product you need to satisfy your market, how much you expect to sell each week, and for how many weeks. The spreadsheet then figures out how many rows and beds you'll need for the entire season. Then you draw up a field plan and planting schedule. This will help you decide how much seed to order, and generates a field record that you can add notes to during the summer (this is the hard part). You can also set up a harvest record. The spreadsheets are available for \$25. Because they are just Excel spreadsheets, you can adapt them for your own needs after you buy them. For instance, you might add columns for how much you sold particular items for and how much you made on them over the season. This would allow you to go back and figure out how much it cost you to grow and harvest that item, and determine whether you made any money on that crop. For more information, see <http://www.brookfieldfarm.org/cps.html>.

The other system, FarmNotebook, was developed by Eric Wagoner, who operates Boann's Banks Farm in Georgia. You can try it out for a month for free, after which it costs \$25 a year. All the information you enter into FarmNotebook is saved on their server and made available to other members, which is good if you don't want to continually save stuff yourself, but not good if you like to change spreadsheets to adapt to your needs. At this website, you enter information about the varieties of plants you plan to grow, record information about seeding and transplanting (thus creating field records), and then record harvest dates and quantities. You can create a public webpage that you can share with other people, including customers, or make your account entirely private. You need Internet access and a modern browser, such as FireFox, Internet Explorer (6.0 or later versions), or Safari to use FarmNotebook. For more information, see <http://www.farmnotebook.com/>.

If you want to see examples of these systems and don't have an Internet connection, please let me know (612-624-3419; c-tong@umn.edu), and I'll try to have examples available at the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference in February. If you know of other systems that help people keep records, I'd like to know that, too.



MINNESOTA GROWN

Fresh From Your Neighbor

New Ad Kicks Off Television Campaign

Minnesota Olympian Carrie Tollefson made her Minnesota Grown advertising debut in a series of new farmers' market ads on KMSP (Ch 9) and UPN (Ch 29). Joining Tollefson in the ad was Jeff Grayson, former KMSP-TV sports anchor. The ads can be viewed on the new "Carrie's Corner" web page at www.minnesotagrown.com. Funding for the \$24,000 ad campaign came from the Minneapolis and St. Paul Farmers' Markets and the Minnesota Grown Program.

Another new ad will run in late September. Apple orchards and pumpkin patches will be the featured items. Once completed, the new apple ad will also be available for viewing on www.minnesotagrown.com

Minnesota Grown Members Featured on FOX 9 Morning News

Chef Andrew Zimmern of FOX 9 Morning News has featured several members of the Minnesota Grown Program throughout the summer. The series started with an interview of new Minnesota Grown spokesperson Carrie Tollefson at the Minneapolis Farmers' Market in late June. In July, a series of four consecutive segments featured Gilbertson Farms, Twin Pine Farms, Natura Farms and the Berry Patch. In each segment, Chef Andrew gave glowing reviews of the Minnesota Grown Directory and encouraged people to visit and purchase from local growers. Later in the summer, Brewery Creek Market was featured in a story about heirloom tomatoes. Look for several more Minnesota Grown producers to be featured this fall. Chef Andrew's segments air every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at approximately 8:45 a.m. Several of these interviews can be viewed on-line at www.minnesotagrown.com

What's an Official Meteorologist?

In addition to paid ads, part of our partnership with FOX9 includes something called the "Official Meteorologist" program. Although it doesn't involve paid advertising, it often results in a very positive message promoting the Minnesota Grown Directory during the actual newscast. Here's how it works: at the end of the weather segment, the weather person will announce that FOX 9 is the "Official Meteorologist" of the Minnesota strawberry season (or apple season, or Christmas tree season, or.....). They will then add a quick sentence like "You can find over 50 pick-your-own strawberry farms in the FOX 9 Minnesota Grown Directory at MinnesotaGrown.com".

The segments air every Thursday and Friday during the Morning News, 5:00 p.m. news and 9:00 p.m. news. To date, we've been featured on segments promoting the St. Paul Farmers' Market (twice), Minneapolis Farmers' Market (twice), strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes, and apples. Another apple week is planned along with a week for wineries and two weeks for Christmas trees.

State Fair Thank You

It was another successful year of exhibiting for the MFVGA and Minnesota Grown at the state fair. Thousands of Minnesota Grown Directories were distributed along with flyers that encourage people to buy locally whenever possible. The flyer featured the Minnesota Grown Directory, The Heartland Food Network (to find restaurants that feature local food) and Green Routes (to plan daytrips and vacations that include local farms and other unique local businesses).

Despite the challenging growing conditions, the display was once again filled with beautiful Minnesota Grown produce donated by MFVGA members, including Dehn's Garden, Inc., Green Barn Garden Center, Hydrosun, Jewel Lane Farm, Marshall's Farm Market, Pahl's Market, and Pine Tree Orchards, Inc. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

The display wouldn't be possible without volunteers to staff the booth. A huge thank you goes out to all the volunteers who worked one or more shifts this year:

Shelly Gifford, Sheryl Williams, Roger Anderson, Tom & Sharon Pogreba, Deloris Nielson, Gary McDougall, Bill & Nancy Bauer, Jean, Steve & Chris Froehlich, Tim & Marie Mack, Ken & Sandy Olson, Maria and Gina Stewart, Del Herbert, Tim Peterson, Dottie McKinley, Julie Wood and Pat Bruske, Mary Raddatz, Denny Havlicek, and David & Cheryl Jones. In addition to these individual volunteers, members of the Minnesota Association of Meat Processors and the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association each teamed up to staff an entire day on behalf of their respective associations. Minnesota Grown Program staff made sure the booth was clean, stocked and ready to go each day and filled in for the handful of shifts that didn't have a volunteer. As always, Marilyn and Tom did a great job of rounding up donated produce and delivering it throughout the Fair.

Jane Eckert to Headline Marketing Conference

Reserve March 1st on your calendars and plan to attend the Minnesota Grown Marketing Conference to hear noted agritourism and marketing expert Jane Eckert!

Jane was raised on her family's apple orchard outside of St. Louis, Missouri, and eventually pursued an executive career in

MN Grown continued on page 6

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.

corporate marketing for more than 15 years, working for such giants as Atlantic Richfield Oil Company. Combining her marketing expertise and her passion for agriculture, she returned to her roots as Vice President of Marketing for Eckert's Country Store and Farms. Through her innovative ideas and through working closely with CVBs and tourism authorities, she helped develop the farm into one of metropolitan St. Louis' most popular entertainment and tourist destinations, attracting 500,000 guests annually.

Jane has been featured in *U.S.A. Today* and interviewed for hundreds of newspapers, magazines and radio shows throughout the country. In her speeches and workshops, she has helped thousands of tourism professionals to see the financial benefits of promoting the niche product of agritourism. Jane was honored with the **2004 Outstanding Leadership Award** from the **North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association**. She has been an active member of Convention and Visitors Bureaus both in Missouri and Illinois. And she is past president of both the St. Louis Attractions Association, Belleville Tourism in Illinois and The North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association.

Additional topics and speakers will be added as we get closer to the conference. Visit the producers' section of MinnesotaGrown.com for more details.

A Banner Year for Directory Distribution

Demand for the Minnesota Grown Directories has been off the charts this year. We entered the State Fair with just 6,000 copies remaining of a print run of 170,000! In addition to the printed copies, traffic to the on-line Directory is up nearly 50% from a year ago at this time. Look for Directory renewals in early December. If you aren't in the 2006 Directory but would like information about joining us in 2007, visit the producer page of MinnesotaGrown.com or contact Brian Erickson at 651-201-6539.

Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program Now Accepting Applications

The Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grants are available from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Information about the program and a copy of the Grant Application are available at: www.mda.state.mn.us/esap (scroll down to DEMONSTRATION GRANT) or call the MDA at 651-201-6686 to request a copy of the application. The deadline for submitting a Grant Application is DECEMBER 15, 2006 at 4:30 p.m.

Individual grants of up to \$25,000 are available for three-year projects that benefit the environment, increase farm net profits through cost reduction or enhanced marketing, and improve the farm family quality of life. Past grant projects are featured in the *Greenbook 2006* which is free and available at: www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/greenbook.html or by calling the number above.

Farm Transition & Estate Planning: Build Your Exit Strategy

Are you struggling with how to transfer your farm business to the next generation? The University of Minnesota Extension Service will present a practical and in-depth workshop on Monday, February 5, 2007 at the St. Cloud Civic Center in St. Cloud, MN.

The full-day workshop covers topics including:

- Farm business transfer strategies
- Tax issues related to the farm transfer
- Wills, trusts, life insurance, power-of-attorney, and long-term care issues
- Developing a written transfer plan
- Treatment of heirs in the transfer process

This workshop will be held the day before the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show. Additional information and a registration form will be included in the December issue of the MFVGA Newsletter. Mark your calendar now and plan to attend.

The Farm Transition & Estate Planning Workshop is sponsored by MFVGA, the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the USDA-Risk Management Agency. These organizations are equal opportunity providers.



Workshop Planned for Beginning Growers

A two-day Beginning Grower Workshop is being planned. The dates and location are yet to be determined, but this very popular and informative two-day workshop will include discussions on developing your future plans and identifying the opportunities for your farm based on farm size and location, soil type, micro climate and area population. There will also be educational sessions on soils, season extension, weed control, insect control, water management, disease identification, wild-life management, post harvest handling and more.

This workshop is designed to address the needs of the beginning grower. More experienced producers who attend the workshop will have the opportunity to review basic, yet very important, concepts.

Further information on the workshop and a registration form will be included in the December 2006 issue of the MFVGA Newsletter. The Beginning Grower workshop is sponsored by MFVGA, the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the USDA-Risk Management Agency. These organizations are equal opportunity providers.

USDA Awards \$20.8 Million in Partnership Agreements to Develop Risk Management Tools and Education

Washington, September 28, 2006 – Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today announced awards of close to \$21 million in agricultural risk management partnership agreements throughout the United States. The agreements provide funds for projects to develop new risk management tools for farmers and ranchers, as well as outreach and education opportunities to limited-resource and other traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers.

“These partnerships are critical to small producers and those with limited resources to better manage the risks associated with agricultural production,” Johanns said.

Funding for these agreements is available under the Federal Crop Insurance Act. USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) administers these projects as well as the federal crop insurance program.

Research and Development Agreements - \$3.6 million

USDA awarded eight agreements, totaling \$3.6 million, for research and development of new non-insurance risk management tools. For example, Kansas State University plans to develop a web-based tool to provide producers facing reduced water allocations with information concerning expectations of crop yields, yield variability, and profitability under a variety of water-use scenarios.

Community Outreach and Assistance Agreements - \$7.1 million

Sixty-two competitively awarded partnerships will use \$7.1 million to educate women, limited-resource, and other traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers. For example, Michigan State University’s project provides limited resource and other traditionally underserved producers programs on intensive small-scale farming skills. The skills are related to year-round, organic production methods of vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers using passive solar greenhouses and integrated perennial polyculture plantings. The community-based organization will conduct workshops and field days on topics such as crop planning, crop rotation, irrigation and aquaculture/aquaponics. Another example is Taos County Economic Development Corporation’s project that focuses on implementing risk management strategies within the livestock sector of Northern New Mexico.

Education Partnership Agreements and Targeted States - \$10.1 million

The Targeted States Program will use \$4.5 million to deliver crop insurance education to producers in 15 historically underserved states through cooperative agreements. Rural Initiative for New American Farmers will provide \$300,000 through six education partnership agreements for immigrant and refugee farmers. Specialty crop, livestock, nursery, and horticulture producers will benefit from 40 partnerships totaling \$5 million in education partnership agreements for commodity partnership programs.

Small Sessions Education Partnership Agreements - \$300,000

Small Sessions is a category of Education Partnership Agreements begun in 2005. Thirty-two small projects, with a total award amount of \$300,000 in amounts up to \$10,000 each, are awarded for projects such as the one in Oklahoma, which will assist beef producers in managing risk by adding new educational initiatives

focused on bio security and livestock enterprise information management. Included in the project are workshops on the National Animal Identification System, in-service training for educators and two statewide conferences. In Wyoming, a partnership project will specifically target livestock producers, farmers who produce forage for livestock consumption and specialty crop growers by developing and delivering risk management education through onsite programs, media-based education, as well as print and electronic media.

Complete listings of the agreements can be found on the RMA website at: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/agreements/>.

MFVGA is very pleased to announce that we are the recipient of an Education Partnership Agreement. Information on programs will be included in the MFVGA Newsletter.

MDA Announces 2005-2006 Organic Certification Cost Share Program **Program helps defray farmers’ cost of organic certification**

St. Paul, MN. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications from certified organic Minnesota growers for organic certification cost-share payments.

MDA Organic and Diversification Specialist Meg Moynihan said the cost-share funds benefit growers and consumers by making certification more affordable.

“Certification assures consumers that organic products are really and truly organic,” said Moynihan. “Certified organic operations bear their own burden of proof and must pay a third party to verify their organic status. Certification is not cheap – costs can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars each year,” she said.

This year, only certified organic farmers may participate in the program. Applicants are eligible for reimbursement of 2/3 of their certification-related costs, up to a maximum of \$200. A total of \$35,000 in state funds are available and will be paid on a first-come, first-serve basis, so farmers are encouraged to submit their applications promptly.

To qualify, applicants must provide a copy of a valid organic certificate and copies of itemized billing statements from an accredited certifier dated between October 1, 2005 and September 30, 2006. Eligible expenses include membership, application, and inspection fees, as well as user fees connected with the crops or products covered by the qualifying certificate. Applications must be postmarked by November 15, 2006.

The MDA has mailed application forms to the more than 500 certified organic farms on its mailing list. Applications and other program details are available on the MDA organic web site at www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic. Interested growers and handlers may also call Meg Moynihan at 651-201-6616 to request an application or ask questions about the program.

Advertising and Promotion

By Douglas Dunn**

(Editor's note: This article was found on the National Ag-Risk Library website. It was published in 1995 by Arizona Cooperative Extension and some of the information may be dated and specific to the Arizona area. Many of the ideas and suggestions, however, are still valid and can be applied to Minnesota operations. State and local authorities should be contacted for regulations regarding signage, sampling and other questions specific to your operation.)

You may have the finest product and the most attractive prices, but if potential customers don't know about your business, your chances of success are limited. Advertising and promotion refer to activities undertaken to increase sales or enhance the image of a product or business. Advertising is used primarily to inform the potential customer of (1) the availability of products or services, (2) when they are in season, (3) where you are located and (4) anything special about your product. Promotional activities are important for maintaining customer traffic throughout the market season – used early in the season to draw customers to your business and during the season to maintain customer traffic levels during slow periods.

Unfortunately, the benefits of advertising and promotion for direct farm marketers have yet to be consistently demonstrated. Promotion of farm products appears to be effective in some cases, but not in others. The potential for successful advertising and promotion is increased when products are clearly differentiated, are of exceptionally high quality, are very seasonal in nature or are new offerings. Research conducted on direct farm marketing indicates that advertising, with emphasis on product freshness and quality, is more likely to move produce than price cutting.

How much should you spend? It is considered good business in retail marketing to spend 2 to 3 percent of gross sales for advertising. A 1985 survey of direct farm marketers in the mid-Atlantic states showed that producers spent an average of 3 percent of sales on advertising. You may find you cannot afford to do as much advertising as you would like. Therefore, it is important to set priorities. A scattered shotgun approach with limited funds usually ends up with poor results. It is important to plan your advertising program, otherwise you may fritter away your hard earned dollars. Know your targeted customers and direct your appeals to them. Be honest and factual.

On-farm and roadside markets with that "something special" usually build their merchandising program around a distinguishing trade-mark – a unique sign, display, atmosphere or building design. Advertising is easier to remember and more appealing when backed up by a unique, easily illustratable business name or slogan that clearly and concisely states the nature of the business and/or the principle products sold, e.g., WILBER'S WATERMELONS, APPLE ANNE'S – Fruit, Cider, Bakery Goods, RATZLAFF'S CHEMICAL FREE PRODUCE. Avoid creative names that may serve to confuse your potential customer. Many successful on-farm businesses carry the owners' name, creating a more intimate and sincere relationship with the consumer.

In the summer of 1993, a survey was undertaken of the fresh farm produce outlets in Cochise County, Arizona. Visitors were asked how they learned about the direct farm market they were patronizing. A similar survey was completed in Michigan. The results,

summarized as follows, give some indication of the effectiveness of different promotional activities.

How did you learn about this fresh farm outlet?

	Arizona	Michigan
Word-of-mouth; from friends or family	45.4%	51%
Newspaper articles	14.6%	n.a.
Roadside signs	10.6%	21%
Media advertising	9.3%	10%
"Fresh Farm produce" brochure	3.4%	n.a.
Travel information centers	n.a.	3%
From other producers/businesses	4.2%	n.a.

Have you seen/heard the following advertisements?

	Arizona
Roadside signage	68%
Newspaper articles	49%
Newspaper advertising	48%
"Fresh Farm Produce" brochure	34%
Radio advertising	11%
T.V. coverage	9%

Let's now look at each of these promotional activities and how they might be used in your enterprise. To help you evaluate these advertising options, first ask yourself: Why am I considering doing this? What is it suppose to do? What are my goals? Then seek feedback from your customers, particularly new customers, as to how they heard about you, to determine which advertising media was most effective.

1. Word-of-mouth

What can you do to help your present customers spread the word? Provide visitors with your business card. Include fliers or coupons with each purchase and ask your customers to pass them on to family and friends. Develop and distribute "point of purchase" marketing materials and displays:

A "Farm Fresh Produce" buyers' guide and map (discussed later).

Information on "how to" pick, reduce spoilage, can, freeze, dry produce, etc.

Recipes and cooking ideas.

How to get to other farm outlets and community points of interest.

Build repeat customers through customer satisfaction. Inquire into the customers' needs. Seek suggestions for improvement. If visitors have a bad experience or don't find what they were looking for, they not only don't return, but will also tell others where not to stop.

Maintain a guest register or ask customers to fill out a pre-printed card. Then mail them a postcard or flier at the start of next year's season thanking them for their business, indicating when different produce will be available and inviting them back. Hopefully they will also bring others. Consider having customers register directly on to a postcard. Later, print your message on the reverse side. This can save you a lot of time.

Advertising continued on page 9

2. Media coverage

The fresh farm produce outlets in the Wilcox, Arizona area have been particularly successful in generating and receiving news coverage in local and regional newspapers and television. Not only has this media coverage been very effective in promoting the outlets, it is free. The direct farm marketers in an area should consider banding together to generate media publicity. Name (contract with) a publicist to develop media opportunities and systematically generate positive publicity for the area's direct farm marketing outlets. This might be done through the local Chamber of Commerce. Organize a media tour of area outlets. Invite the media to special events.

3. Roadside Signs

Road side signs are a particularly important information source once travelers are near your business or event. Road side signs can be hindrances if they are not done professionally and kept well maintained. If signs are unattractive, hard to read, home painted and unkept, your operation is likely to start with a bad impression.

The entrance to your business should be clearly marked with a pull-off area on each side of the road. Your initial road sign should, as a rule, be placed at least 2,500 feet from the entrance to your business to allow travelers a safe stopping distance. Then place several advance road signs out from your initial sign that state the distance to your business, e.g., JONES' PRODUCE, 2 MILES. Signage should start from the nearest Interstate or major highway and clearly direct visitors to your business location.

Roadside signs should contain six words or less, with a 1 or 2 word focal point to catch the traveler's interest. Use 7" to 12" letters and a good contrast of colors. The most easily read color combinations are black, dark blue, bottle green or scarlet red on white, yellow, orange or green. It is not always the size of the letters that make them readable, but the space or margins around them. Create a simple logo that provides easy recognition.

4. Media Advertising

There are a number of options for media advertising. Interviews with direct farm marketers indicate that the most commonly used mediums are:

- a. Classified ads in the food or for sale sections of the Want Ads of local and regional newspapers: The ad should indicate what is for sale, when and where. Most direct farm marketers do not advertise price.
- b. Display ads in the entertainment or food section or in special supplements of regional newspapers: Such ads should be attractively designed and easy to read, with a limited number of words and a good use of white space. Incorporate a trademark or symbol in every ad so that it is quickly recognized by your regular customers. The advertising department of the newspaper can help you plan a layout. Since such ads are more expensive, cooperative funding should be explored with other area direct farm marketers. A group ad will convey to potential customers the wide variety of outlets, produce and experiences available, and assure visitors that they are likely to get what they want if they make the trip.
- c. Radio ads: Due to their higher cost, spot announcements on the radio must be short and to the point, 15 to 30 seconds. More

frequent short announcements are believed to reach more people than less frequent longer ones. Frequent spot announcements can help create name recognition.

- d. Place information articles and/or advertising in area shopping guides, tourist publications, company and special interest newsletters targeted to specific audiences, e.g., Garden Clubs, health food, retirement communities, ethnic food.
- e. Yellow pages listing.

5. Community brochure/buyers' guide

Many rural communities have developed an informational brochure or directory that lists all direct farm marketers in the area with a description of the produce they offer. Also included is a map of the area with directions to each outlet and a harvest calendar indicating when different fruits and vegetables will be available. Such brochures are often developed with the aid of the county Cooperative Extension office and are funded through a subscription of those businesses listed. Printing and financial aid may also be available through a local utility or the state Department of Agriculture. Such directories will be effective, however, only if they are properly promoted and distributed to prospective customers. The printing cost of the brochure is small compared to the cost of promoting the directory, postage for mailing them and travel costs in placing the directory at travel information centers and brochure racks at strategic locations. This directory should also be distributed at the direct farm market outlets to assist with referrals and encourage return visitors and word-of-mouth promotion. This project might be coordinated by the local Chamber of Commerce.

The Wilcox community has implemented a telephone service which out-of-town customers can call for a regularly updated recording indicating produce availability. The service is sponsored through subscriptions from the advertised businesses.

6. Referrals

Make sure that the employees of recreation and tourist facilities, motels, gasoline stations, restaurants, campgrounds, the Chamber of Commerce and other visitor oriented businesses are aware of your business. These people can help channel more customers to you. Make referrals. Exchange customers. Help visitors find the products they are looking for. The Cochise County survey found that many visitors were not aware of the wide diversity of products available at other locations. Some returned home without purchasing sought-after items. When asked what other products or activities they would like to see offered, a significant number of visitors indicated a park/picnic area, swimming, horseback riding, a good place to eat – not knowing that those facilities were available in the Wilcox community. A community brochure and map to local restaurants, museums, motels, retail shops, swimming and other recreational facilities should be available at the farm outlets.

7. Special Festivals

Agricultural festivals can be effective in attracting visitors to your community. They can generate additional sales if on-site activities are provided which bring potential customers in contact with your products. Such on-site activities might include things like hay rides, pick your own pumpkin (or watermelon), menudo cook-off, celebrity tomato pitch, watermelon seed spitting contest and farm tours. Unfortunately, the research indicates that limited spending on

Advertising continued on page 9

fresh farm products occurred at agricultural festivals mainly because such products (even those that the festival was named after) were not widely available. The festival activities often interfered with visitors getting to local businesses and on-farm outlets.

8. Special tours.

Field trips and special tours have proven effective in bringing people to the area and your business that might not have made it on their own. Such groups include garden clubs, residents of retirement communities, ethnic clubs, foreign visitors and company picnics. School tours have been effective in stimulating return visits by the children with their parents in tow.

9. Coupons, special discounts, drawings

Experience indicates that general discounting can be counter productive in the direct marketing of farm produce. A discounted price suggests lower quality. The use of coupons, can, however, help you track the effectiveness of different advertising media. In general it is recommended that discounts be expressed in whole dollars and cents rather than as a percent and focus on increasing business during the slow seasons of the years. Giving your valued customers an unexpected benefit, e.g., free samples of new or slow moving produce may have a more positive impact than a discount.

10. Labels

Labels on bags, boxes, jars and containers reinforce your name to the consumer. Labels provide an opportunity for word-of-mouth advertising as guests to your customers' home observe your products. Generally, people will buy food items as gifts only when there is an attractive label indicating its origin and special qualities. Also labels can be effective in promoting the quality of your product, e.g., vine ripened, pesticide free, organic, high fiber, farm fresh, vitamin rich. Your name, logo and/or slogan can also be printed on T-shirts, aprons, hats and bags, for sale, to help your customers promote your business.

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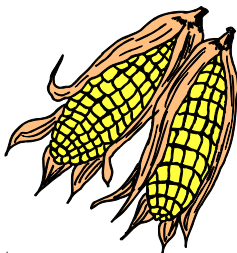
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**Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference
February 6 & 7, 2007 – St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN**

Conference Preview

Sessions are being planned on the following topics – plus much more:

- Sweet Corn
- Pumpkins
 - Transplants
 - Insecticides
- Berry Production
 - Grower Profiles
 - Production
- Marketing
- Apples
 - Grapes
- High Tunnel Production
 - Just Getting Started?
 - Advanced High Tunnel Management
- Farmers' Markets
 - Farm Safety
- Organics
 - Transitioning to Organic
 - Compost
 - Trap crops & insect management
- Specialty Crops
 - Lettuce & greens
 - Tart cherries
 - Sweet potatoes
 - Garlic
- Cole Crops
- Technology Update



Mark Your Calendars:

Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show
February 6 & 7, 2007
St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN

**Peddling Your Pickles Safely?
Food Processing Workshop**

February 5, 2007
St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN

**Farm Transition & Estate Planning:
Build Your Exit Strategy**

February 5, 2007
St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN

Beginning Grower Workshop

Watch for details in the December MFVGA Newsletter

ATTENTION TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS

**The 2007 Upper Midwest Regional
Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show
will be held February 6 & 7, 2007 at the St. Cloud Civic Center in St. Cloud, MN.**

Have we received your application? Return it as soon as possible to reserve your booth(s).

If you need an application or more information, contact the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400.

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